Andy Ihnatko

iPhone™

FULLY LOADED

2ND EDITION

Covers the
iPhone 3G and
iPod Touch!

9:41

Get more out of—and into—you iPhone
than you ever thought possible

iPhone
Fully Loaded

If You've Got It, You Can iPhone It

Andy Ihnatko

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Colophon: This book was produced using the Adobe Garamond typeface for the body copy and the Myriad Pro typeface for the headlines.

Acknowledgments

First and last, I dedicate this book to my Mom and my Dad.

But the fun thing about this page in a book is that it's like the 30 seconds you get between the moment Salma Hayek announces that you've won an Academy Award and the moment that the orchestra starts playing you out. You could just let the show move straight on to what the audience is really waiting for (Best Sound Design in a Second-Unit Shot in Which We're Supposed to Pretend We Don't Know That They Hired a Body Double for That Actress). But you've got some attention on you and you'd like to thank a few people who've helped you out.

Shout-outs go to the many folks who helped me finish this book as sands steadily shifted underneath it: Carol Person and Courtney Allen at Wiley, and the book's designer, Galen Gruman. Props as usual go to my agent, Carole McClendon, for once again doing that which agents do best: allow the writer to get on with the writing.

But last as first, my true thanks go to Mom and Dad.

Regular followers of these acknowledgments will be interested to know that Mom finally won the War of the Ponytail. I cut it off last week.

Shouldn't you call your Mom, dear reader? Why don't you put the book down and call your Mom.

Credits

About the Author

The Wikipedia entry for Andy Ihnatko categorizes him as "Living Person — American Journalist." That's just about right.

He's been writing regular columns about technology since 1989, contributing to mainstream publications as well as every magazine that ever carried the prefix "Mac-." He's currently a regular columnist for *Macworld*, MacObserver.com, and a regular panelist on the popular *MacBreak Weekly* and *This Week in Technology* (TWiT) podcasts. When he can afford to get his good jacket out of the cleaners, he makes appearances on the *CBS Early Show*, too.

His weekly tech column in *The Chicago Sun-Times* might very well be worthy of a Pulitzer. But just try convincing the Pulitzer committee. Seriously, Andy's tried and failed. And he wants that Pulitzer *so damned badly.* If you wear that Pulitzer medallion around your neck, you can park wherever the hell you want. If you're ever in Chicago and you see a Mercedes parked across two handicapped spaces and part of the sidewalk, you know Roger Ebert must be nearby.

Andy is good to his parents, is kind to animals, donates blood regularly, and returns his library books on time. He lives in Boston with his two goldfish, Click and Drag.

You can visit Andy on the Web at Andy Ihnatko's Celestial Waste of Bandwidth: cwob.com.

Contents

Introduction

Welcome again, fellow sensation-seekers, to yet another book introduction. If you've read my previous books, you know how I feel about these things. This is the point in the book where I stand like Mr. Roarke at the start of every episode of *Fantasy Island*, raise my margarita glass in a welcoming toast, and hope like hell that you're not looking around as the caliber of your fellow guests (typically Anson Williams and Barbi Benton) and feeling like you've just been profoundly ripped off.

Yes, it's where I Explain Myself. There's a good chance that you're leafing through this book at a major retailer, or at a friend's house. The book pulses with a certain resonance of destiny, and it's available at attractive prices, but should you follow your heart?

Well, it depends on what your heart is telling you. If your heart is saying, "I should just stroll off with it," then I urge you to bring a couple of other organs in on the conference call.

Your wrists, for instance, will have much to say. They remember the time your older brother snapped those novelty handcuffs on them and then "forgot" where he left the key. Your feet report that they will do their best to propel you out of the store or your friend's house well ahead of any pursuers, but nonetheless they don't feel as though they should speak for the knees, which would need to be ready for a great deal of praying and begging, should worse come to worst.

But why am I talking nonsense? Your moral compass is so powerful that it can be used for street navigation. You understand how important it is that I buy a plasma TV that's so large I could serve dinner for six on it. And not for my own distraction, you understand. My dear mother doesn't like to pry but she *does* appreciate these little tangible reminders that my writing career is going well.

Besides, why steal, when this bookstore has so many plush, comfy chairs, and a full coffee bar? And if you ask to *borrow* this book from

your friend instead of swiping it, well, that's a built-in excuse to get together again, isn't it? Perhaps you could buy this friend a dinner, in gratitude? It's these small touches that reinforce the gossamer threads that keep our Grand Society together.

Also, if you happen to dribble salsa all over it you'll have to do the right thing and replace it. So that's the copy you bought for yourself *plus* the replacement copy *plus* the friend's original copy. This will put me well on my way toward sliding a Blu-ray player below the TV. With a full high-def setup in my living room, maybe Mom won't be shy about setting me up with her friend's daughter, the periodontist. She's damned cute and my gums would no longer lack for caring attention.

And yes, I mean it *that* way, as well.

THE POINT OF ALL THIS

But an introduction isn't merely here to help hook me up with a dental professional. It's also here to tell you a bit about the book in general.

A recently good pal gave me a 1910 book on housekeeping and its introduction truly is a world-beater. With just a couple of easy search-and-replaces it'll work perfectly for *iPhone Fully Loaded, Second Edition:*

"This book is designed to help the intelligent [iPhone or iPod Touch user] of limited means who looks upon the [usage of said device] as one worthy of her best efforts, and who fully realizes that the business of [having a kick-ass phone] is the most important as well as the most complicated business in the world. Between the covers of this book she will find an extensive and eminently practical fund of [iPhone and iPod Touch] information upon which she an draw, almost

without limit, to meet the various [iPhone and iPod Touch] problems that inevitably present themselves from year to year. The table of contents is a convincing argument as to the value of this work. The compiler has taken much pleasure in preparing it, and bespeaks for it a kindly welcome and hearty appreciation in thousands and thousands of [worldwide] homes."

There you go. Sets the stage nicely. Also: It's in the public domain.

Like the other books in my *Fully Loaded* series, the purpose of this book is *not* to give you a ground-up explanation of how the iPhone works. The philosophy of this series has always been that there are already *plenty* of books out there that teach you the usual stuff. This book won't teach you how to configure your iPhone for push e-mail. Nor will it show you how to purchase music from the iTunes Store. I refuse to explain that if you hold your finger on the virtual keyboard's Symbols key and *drag* it across instead of tapping, the QWERTY keyboard will automatically return after you lift your finger above the symbol you wanted to enter, thus saving you a couple of taps.

Oh. I just did. Well, that's a freebie.

No, the goal of *Fully Loaded* has always been to look upon a device like the iPhone as an empty vessel that you can fill to the brim with every type of material you need or want in your personal or professional life. The iPhone is a pretty damned scary-crazy-nice bit of tech, but just because the manual says nothing about syncing YouTube videos on it, or storing Microsoft Office documents, or converting your e-mails into podcasts that you can listen to during your morning commute doesn't mean that you can't *do* any of those things with it.

And it *also* doesn't mean that the standard methods in the standard books necessarily represent the best way to do things.

So what does it mean? Well, it means that there's a certain knack to getting the full potential out of your iPhone. And my honorable and trusty friend — if you did in fact steal this book despite my call to your higher nature, obviously I'm not talking to you, here — you can call me Doug Fieger.

Doug Fieger. You know founder and lead singer for The Knack? "My Sharona" was probably their biggest hit.

Okay, that's not really important. The point is that if you're looking for the basic stuff that you can either get from any other book or from just fooling around with your iPhone for a week, this isn't the book for you.

This book is for people who want someone to ask them "Wait, how did you get *Raiders of the Lost Ark* on your iPhone? That movie isn't in the iTunes store!" with incredulous eyes and trembling hands that daren't touch the hem of your robe for fear of being reduced to ash by the awesome power bottled within your corporeal form.

Oh, and if you own an iPod Touch instead of an iPhone, jump right in, the water's just fine. Not *everything* in this book will apply to you but you'll find that any technique or trick that relies on the Music, Video, or Photo viewers on your iPod Touch, on the Safari browser, or on third-party apps, will work just fine. That's a pretty big chunk of the book.

I think I've said everything I wanted to say here. Let's get started. Final words:

If you're reading this in a bookstore, I think you'll wind up buying the book if you read the chapter about ripping DVDs and then the chapter on carrying around files. All this stuff is good, but those two will quickly convince you that your money's well spent.

If you're reading this because you spotted it on a friend's bookshelf, compliment this friend on his or her fine taste. If it's a dating situation, that'll put you in good. If it's a friendship situation, it might lay the groundwork for getting this person to lend you something way more valuable. In the meantime, tear out the aforementioned two chapters when the friend is distracted. They're some of the most useful bits in the book, so the person is bound to buy a new copy. Plus you'll read them at home and buy a copy of your own. Two more royalties for Andy. Awesome: I'm on my way to a Wii console as well.

If you're reading this because you're robbing some dude's house: Police response time is typically about two and a half minutes. So take the book and *go*, already. I've just Googled for information on alarm codes and it seems that the default disarm password for the two most popular home security systems are 2287 and 1111.

Just remember who your friends are. Maybe you could tear out those chapters and leave the book and the chapters in the next two houses you rob? Again, I'm convinced that your next victims will be so taken by the incomplete book that they'll both buy fresh copies.

Which will work out well for you, too, because remember, my house will soon contain a 72-inch plasma HDTV, a Blu-ray player, and a Wii which means that I'll finally have stuff worth stealing.

OH YEAH, THAT BORING, PRACTICAL STUFF

Well, I can't say I'm a fan of conventions

because they are so … er … conventional. But even I, despite all my sheer force of personality, must sometimes bow to conventions. Like for all those geeky aspects inevitable in a book that talks about technology, so you know what I mean when I diverge from good ol' English. Wherever possible, I've kept the book free of weird computer symbols and geeky icons. But some insisted on being used, so here are their conventions.

Mouse and Touchpad Conventions

Here's what I mean when I talk about using the mouse or the touchpad on the iPhone or iPod Touch:

○ **Click:** Most Mac mice have only one button, but some have two or more; all PC mice have at least two buttons. If you have a multibutton mouse, quickly press and release the leftmost mouse button once when I say to click the mouse. (If your mouse has only one button — you guessed it — just press and release the button you have.)

○ **Double-click:** When I say to double-click, quickly press and release the leftmost mouse button twice (if your mouse has only one button, just press and release twice the button you have). On some multibutton mice, one of the buttons can function as a double-click (you click it once, the mouse clicks twice); if your mouse has this feature, use it — it saves strain on your hand.

○ **Right-click:** A Windows feature since Windows 95, right-clicking means clicking the right-hand mouse button. On a Mac's one-button mouse, hold the Control key when clicking the mouse

button to achieve the right-click effect. On multibutton Mac mice, Mac OS X automatically assigns the righthand button to Control+click.

○ **Tap:** This is the equivalent of clicking on a touchscreen, using your finger rather than a mouse.

○ **Drag:** Dragging is used for moving and sizing items in a document. To drag an item on a computer, position the mouse pointer on it. Press and hold down the mouse button, and then slide the mouse across a flat surface to drag the item. Release the mouse button to drop the dragged item in its new location. On a touchpad, just touch and hold on the item to be dragged, and then drag your finger until the item is in its new position; then let go.

○ **Swipe:** On a touchpad, move your finger in a sideways motion.

The commands that you select with the mouse (or touch) by using the program menus appear in this book in normal typeface. When you choose some menu commands, a related pull-down menu or a pop-up menu appears. If I describe a situation in which you need to select one menu and then choose a command from a secondary menu or list box, I use an arrow symbol. For example, "Choose Edit ▶ Paste" means that you should Choose the Paste command from the Edit menu.

Keyboard Conventions

In those rare cases where I get into nitty-gritty computer commands, I'll provide both the Windows and Macintosh shortcuts throughout, with the Windows shortcut first. In most cases, the Windows and Mac shortcuts are the same, except for the names of the

keys, as follows:

○ The Windows Ctrl key is the most-used shortcut key. Its Mac equivalent is the Command key, which is indicated on keyboards and program menus (and thus in this book) by the symbol ⌘.

○ Shift is the same on the Mac and Windows. In many Mac program menus, Shift is displayed by the symbol ⇧.

○ The Option key on the Mac is usually the same as the Alt key in Windows. In many Mac program menus — including iTunes — you'll see the symbol ⌥.

○ The Control key on the Mac has no Windows equivalent (it is *not* the same as the Windows Ctrl key). Many Mac programs indicate it with the symbol ^ in their menus.

○ The Tab key is used both to move within fields in panels and dialog boxes and to insert the tab character in text. iTunes and many other Mac programs indicate it in menus with the symbol ⇥.

○ The Enter key (Windows) or Return key (Mac) is used to apply a dialog box's settings and close the dialog box (equivalent to clicking OK or Done), as well as to insert a hard paragraph return in text. In many Mac programs, it is indicated in menus by the symbol ↵. Note that there is another key labeled Enter on most keyboards, in your number keypad. This keypad Enter usually works like the regular Return or Enter.

○ The Delete key (Mac) and Backspace key (Windows) deletes text, one character at a time, to the left of the text-insertion point. On the Mac, programs like iTunes use the symbol ⌫ to indicate Delete. Windows also has a separate Delete key that deletes text, on

character at a time, to the right of the text-insertion point. The Mac's Del key — called Clear on 1990s-era keyboards and Delete⌦ on Apple keyboards since mid-2008 — deletes text to the right, like the Windows Delete key.

If you're supposed to press several keys at the same time, I indicate that by placing plus signs (+) between them. Thus, Shift+⌘+A means press and hold the Shift and ⌘ keys, then press A. After you've pressed the A key, let go of all three keys. (You don't need to hold down the last letter in the sequence.)

I also use the plus sign (+) to join keys to mouse movements. For example, Alt+drag means to hold the Alt key while dragging the mouse in Windows , and Option+drag means to hold the Option key while dragging the mouse on the Mac.

Rarely, I indicate programming code or text you must enter as is into some dialog box or other program interface. I do that by formatting the text in a typewriter-like font: like this.

Okay, that's everybody. Yoiks and away.

PART I

The Basics of Content

1

Remedial iTunes

The Skim

Yes, a book about the latest, freshest, and (if I may be a bit bold) most frabjous smartphone/media player/compensation for every childhood disappointment begins with a chapter on the basics of iTunes.

Blame my friend Roy. He broke my car.

Or at least, he *let* me break my car. Yes, it was ten years old. Yes, it was pushing 100,000 miles. But I was looking after it carefully and expected to get another couple of years out of it. Just to be sure, I had my friend Roy teach me basic maintenance. Roy was definitely the man to ask. He knows so much about cars that I imagine he has a second, ancillary brain down near his butt, like a dinosaur, solely to store information about the correct tire pressure for hundreds of late-model sedans and SUVs.

He told me about the importance of checking the oil. "It's going to be leaking somewhere," he said, after walking me through the procedure. "If you don't know you're low on oil, you'll blow the engine and that's a career-ending injury even on a *new* car."

I blew the engine about two months afterward.

Seems that when he told me about checking the oil, he neglected to point out the importance of being parked on a level surface. My house is on a big hill and apparently the dipstick was only reaching the deep

end of the pool.

I am convinced that I am not an idiot. Roy usually asks for ten minutes of airtime for partisan rebuttal on this point.

The way I see it, this chapter is your oil-change reminder for iTunes. If you don't already know all about iTunes, this is a quick refresher course; every time you see the phrase "and then add the file to your iTunes library" you can just mentally cut-and-paste this whole chapter in between the letter "y" and the terminal punctuation.

And if you already know iTunes inside and out — well, I myself occasionally enjoy a good sneer as I skip over something I already understand well.

It's just never anything to do with a car,

TIDBIT

Creating playlists isn't absolutely necessary. Your iPhone does a fine job of allowing you to idly browse your content by artist, album title, et cetera, or search for what you want via the keyboard.

But as advanced as its technology is, your iPhone has no way of knowing that *these* eleven songs, played in *this* specific order, constitute the ultimate make out mix tape. Without your guidance, "Tony Bennett and Bill Evans: Together Again" always begins with Track 1 and ends with Track 18, and doesn't skip over songs like "You Don't Know What Love Is," which I think you'll agree will totally destroy the romantic mood.

that's all. Not any *more.*

THE VERY VERY (VERY) BASICS

The one slight bummer about iPhones and iPods is that you, the humble hard-working user, are never allowed to access the device directly. Media phones and players made by other companies may be slightly tawdry, but they're like little hard drives. If you don't want to use a slick (or perhaps not-so-slick) piece of software to manage the device's contents, you can just drag music and videos and other files into the thing manually.

For a million reasons — some in your best interest, some not — Apple doesn't give you that same courtesy. The iTunes app always, always, *always* acts as the gatekeeper. The iTunes app acts as a library for all your media (see Figure 1-1). You then selectively tell iTunes what content you'd like to have on your device, and then iTunes does all the sorting and moving for you.

So the path from "A file on your hard drive" to "Something you can enjoy on your iPhone" goes like this:

- ☉ You import the file into iTunes, which adds it to its huge and ever-increasing catalogue of music and video.
- ☉ You organize your content into playlists.
- ☉ You tell iTunes which content should be automatically copied to your iPhone's media library whenever you sync.
- ☉ Your iPhone is updated with fresh content when you plug it into your computer. This can happen automatically as soon as iTunes realizes that the iPhone has been plugged in, or if you're the sort of control freak who won't let an employee have a pad of freaking sticky notes out of the supply cabinet without

Figure 1-1
iTunes: the center of our iPhone passion play

filling out a form, you can explicitly tell iTunes to update the thing Right Now.

IMPORTING FILES INTO ITUNES

iTunes isn't a simple music player. It isn't an app that just plays a file off your hard drive and then forgets that it ever existed. No, iTunes is grabby and ambitious: It's a Media Content Library Management System.

When you import a music or video file into iTunes, information about the file is added to a master database so that you can search for one song among thousands in an instant just by providing a few details ("A seven-minute version of 'Anarchy In The UK' recorded by Buddy Ebsen"). And unless you've explicitly told iTunes *not* to organize your library for

you — ach, those Control Freak issues, yet again — iTunes will also copy the file into its own special music directory.

There are two ways to add files to your iTunes library:

Method the First: The Add To Library command

1. Choose File ▶ Add To Library.

2. The Windows edition of iTunes has two Add To Library menu items. Add File allows you to select one specific file. If you select Add Folder, iTunes will scan the contents of a selected folder and automatically add any music or video file that it's capable of playing.

3. In the Macintosh version of iTunes, a single command handles both tasks. Either

5

Figure 1-2
A new playlist takes its first breath.

iTunes will percolate for a minute. When it's done, all the selected files that iTunes knows how to deal with will appear in the iTunes library.

Method the Second: Just drag it

If you're in Windows Explorer or the Mac Finder and you can see the name or icon of the files you want to import into iTunes, you can drag the files straight into iTunes without any further ado. Drag them into the iTunes window, drag them into iTunes's desktop icon, or its tile in the Windows taskbar or the Macintosh Dock. However you do it, if iTunes thinks it knows how to handle that sort of file, a plus sign (+) will appear next to your mouse pointer when you enter iTunes's airspace. Release, and iTunes will take it from there.

way, you'll find yourself looking at your computer's standard file/folder browser.

4. Select a music or video file, or a folder containing music and videos.

5. Click the highlighted button. On a Mac, it'll be Choose. If you're selecting a file on a PC, it'll be OK, or Open if you're using the Add Folder command.

ORGANIZING YOUR MUSIC INTO PLAYLISTS

Using playlists brings two big boons. Yes, it's handy to be able to instantly access a collection of songs that's tailor-made for workouts, meditation, or piloting your souped-up Dodge Charger down rural backroads at breakneck speeds with Boss Hogg in close pursuit. But it also helps you manage the problem of having more music and video than you have space on your iPhone.

After all, the explicit goal of this book is to help you stuff that device until it's ready to a-splode. If you get to the back cover of this book and you have no need for playlists, then I'll somehow feel as though I haven't

done my job.

(No refunds!)

You can create as many different playlists as you like. iTunes offers them in two different flavors: The plain-vanilla variety, through which you manually select specific music and video, and Smart Playlists, through which you simply describe the *sort* of music you'd like to hear, and trust iTunes to work out the specific details.

Plain Old Playlists

You can create a new playlist either by selecting File ♦ New Playlist or by clicking the plus (+) button at the bottom of the iTunes browser window. Either way, an untitled playlist will appear in iTunes's list of music sources (see Figure 1-2).

Untitled playlist (the default playlist name) is highlighted and awaits your creative genius. Type in something a little more memorable. "Just Drive" is my usual playlist of stuff I want to hear in the car.

And that's really all there is to it. Any song I drag into "Just Drive" will be added to the playlist, viz:

1. Click on Library in the iTunes window's Sources list. A list of all the music and video in your iTunes library appears.
2. Select one or more items from your library.
3. Drag them over the playlist's name.

Incidentally, when you copy items into a playlist the only thing you're actually copying is the items' information. All your actual music and video files remain where they were in iTunes's library, which means that any music track or video can be in many different playlists all at once.

Honestly, I mean, what sort of life would it be if we could only enjoy "The Cockroach

That Ate Cincinnati" in one playlist at a time?

If you click on the playlist's name, iTunes's browser window will switch to a view of the list of tracks therein. You can change the play order of those items by just dragging them around, or remove items by selecting them and then hitting the backspace or delete key on your keyboard.

Smart Playlists

There are certain features of certain apps that make me want to stick five bucks in an envelope and mail it to the company. Smart Playlists is definitely one of those features.

Smart Playlists allow you to create a playlist without being specific about its contents. You describe the *sort* of content you want and iTunes automatically fills the playlist with stuff that matches that description. iTunes stores a lot of information about all the items in its library — including how frequently and recently you've played them — which means that it's easy to get iTunes to make some fairly sophisticated choices on

your behalf.

For instance: I buy lots of music through the iTunes Music Store, representing all kinds of different artists and genres. And every time I take my hour long constitutional — I'd *like* to call it a "morning jog" but that would imply an ability to run faster than the average man can walk on his hands – I want to listen to my latest tunes.

I could either religiously move tracks in and out of a manual playlist or I can just define a smart playlist by selecting File ▸ New Smart Playlist (see Figure 1-3):

Each line represents a different "rule" to apply when choosing songs; to add a new one, I click the plus (+) button at the end of any rule. This smart playlist says:

◗ **Kind, Contains, Protected:** Chooses only protected songs, meaning copy-protected songs purchased through the iTunes Store.

◗ **Genre, Does Not contain, Audiobook:** Don't choose any spoken-word recordings, or books-on-tape. Neither my metabolism nor my enthusiasm for exercise are great enough to keep my legs moving during 45 minutes of Alan Greenspan's memoirs.

◗ **Time, Is Greater Than, One Minute:** Because sometimes you buy an album with a freak 30-second jingle track or something.

◗ **Last Played, Is Not In The Last, 3, Days:** If I've played this song any time in the last three days, don't bother playing it again. My attention span is desperately short.

Figure 1-3
A smart playlist that selects music for my morning constitutional

Under that list of rules, there's also a line where you specify how much music you'd like, and how you'd like iTunes to make the selection. One hour will do me just fine, though you can alternatively tell iTunes to limit by quantity of songs or the amount of space the collection will take up. You might ask for 700 megabytes of music, which you can then burn onto a CD and play in a rental car, for instance.

I've also told it to select the newest purchases. I could have asked iTunes to pick songs at random, songs that I haven't heard recently, or chosen from an abundance of other options.

Once I click OK, the new playlist will be automatically populated with items that match all the rules I've laid out (see Figure 1-4).

And one of the (many) terrific features of Smart Playlists is that the list is "live." If for whatever reason a track inside a smart playlist no longer meets your list of rules, zap! It's removed from the playlist and replaced with one that does. When I come home from my daily constitutional and re-dock my iPhone, iTunes learns that all those tracks now fail the "hasn't been played in the past three

Figure 1-4
Presto! iTunes is your personal deejay, choosing tunes based on your general likes.

days" test and by the time my phone is done syncing, the Constitutional playlist has been replaced with all-new tracks. If I buy a few new tracks that evening, then the three oldest tracks in the playlist will be kicked out to make room for the new ones.

(Just like the oldest contestants on *Survivor*.)

UPDATING YOUR IPHONE

When you connect your iPhone to your computer, it automatically appears in iTunes's list of available Devices. What happens after that depends on the iPhone Options you've set. You can open the iPhone Options window by clicking on your iPhone's name in the Devices section of the iTunes window. You wind up with a window like the one you see in Figure 1-5.

If you leave the Automatically Sync When This Phone Is Connected box checked, iTunes will update the iPhone's contents automatically every time you plug it in.

There's another tweak to all this: The Sync Only Checked Songs and Videos checkbox. Each video track in every iTunes window has a checkbox next to it. With this

option enabled, any item that *does not* have its checkbox checked will not be synced to your iPod, which makes it easy to "point and shoot" certain items that you never want to hear in the car.

Automatic updates only take place when you plug in your iPhone. You can also tell iTunes "Update this iPhone *right freaking now*" by clicking the Sync button. You'd use this if you've added new items or playlist to your iTunes library since plugging in your iPhone.

You'll note that the Options window is organized into tabs. There's one for each type of media that you can load up on your iPhone. Figure 1-6 shows the Music tab.

Here's where you tell iTunes precisely which bits of your music (or video, or photo, or …) library should be copied to your iPhone.

Take this moment to observe the All Songs and Playlists Option. Take a gooooood long look.

Ha ha! Yes, we all enjoyed a good laugh over that one. Unless you've just had your computer for forty minutes, you already have way more music and video on your machine than you have free space on your iPhone, most likely. That's why iTunes allows you to narrow down the library to just a manageable subset of playlists.

Each pane is a little different, address-
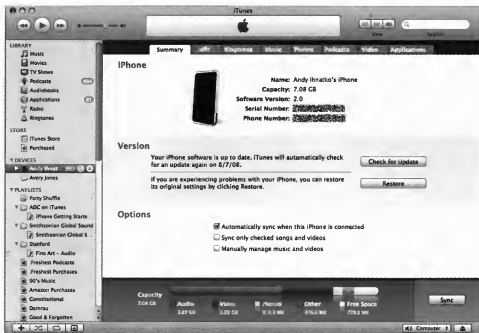
Figure 1-5
The iPhone Options window

ing the unique-ities of that kind of media. Video files tend to be humongous in their own right. An iPhone can handle a thousand songs, but a half-dozen movies can easily max the thing out. So the Video tab lets you select individual shows or movies in addition to managing your content via playlists.

Automatic syncing is definitely the most whiz-bang approach. It makes you feel as though you're just days away from taking delivery on your own atomic-powered jet-belt.

But there's a second option for moving content onto your iPhone or iPod Touch. By clicking on the Summary tab of your iPhone's Options page and then checking the Manually Manage Music and Video box, you can tell iTunes to keep its mitts off your iPhone's library. Nothing will land on your device unless you explicitly drag it onto your

iPhone's icon.

Yeah, that's definitely an option. Absolutely. I mean, speed, simplicity, and convenience are vastly overrated concepts. Besides, the automatic sync features burns as much fossil fuel in one year as an SUV does in an entire month. (Source: Wikipedia. So take it with a grain of salt.)

Managing content manually offers one pretty hefty advantage: It breaks the link between your iPhone and *one* iTunes library. If you're visiting friends at their beach house and you're facing a two-hour drive home, you can simply copy two hours' worth of fresh entertainment from your pals' iTunes library. Or any other source, so long as it isn't protected content (like stuff purchased from the iTunes Store). Otherwise, only your "home" library has permission to add stuff to your iPhone.
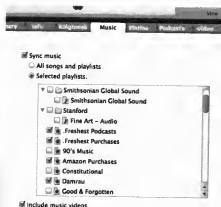
Figure 1-6
Moving tunes from desktop to hiptop

WHAT ITUNES CAN'T DO

The second-generation iPhone OS shines a spotlight on iTunes's limitations. As of this writing, it really isn't a *universal* gatekeeper for putting information on your iPhone or iPod Touch. Music, video, calendars, contacts, and photos. iTunes will help you manage all that stuff. Everything else is your own problem.

And as you start installing third-party apps, that shortcoming becomes more and more glaring. I'll talk later on about installing electronic books on your iPhone. It's a natural; it's just as popular and abundant type of media as music and video. But iTunes will have none of it. Instead, if Tess of the d'Urbervilles is going to plant her dainty behind in your phone, you'll need to use a helper app provided by the folks who sold you the eBook reader app for your iPhone.

Apple has consistently bucked any possibility of letting users and developers use iTunes as a general concierge for *all* the data an iPhone user might want to manage. So developers use all kinds of tricks to install user data.

If you're trying to put an MP3 of "Musk-

rat Ramble" on your phone, it travels along about three feet of USB cable strung between your computer and your iPhone. If you want a copy of a project outline, it doesn't matter that the same company made the desktop app and the iPhone app; the file has to travel out of your desktop, up across the Internet, into Apple's central server, and then from there back down to the iPhone sitting *right on the damned keyboard*.

Well, it works. Thank heavens. But there is something punitive about such a complex answer to a simple question. I suppose I shouldn't complain. Problems like that are the reason why a book like this is necessary.

So that's the end of our first day of school. And now you see why we have all your little desks facing *me* instead of each other. This way, when the bell rings and you all flee into the hallways to whip out your phones and check in with Facebook, you can tell each other that this class was so *lame*, that you *totally* knew everything that Mr. Ihnatko discussed, that this is all so *easy*.

Meanwhile I'm the only one who saw the look on your face when I explained something elemental, and watched your eyes and ears go into full spread-spectrum capture mode. Funny, none of your *friends* seemed like they were learning something new. I bet they'd be really amused if they knew that you've had an iPhone since the very first day the first-generation hardware was available, and didn't know how smart playlists worked.

To put it more simply: Those Hostess cupcakes your mom puts in your lunch come two to a pack. Send one my way from time to time and nobody ever needs to know about this. *Capice?*

2

How to Make 8 Gigabytes Seem Like 80, 16 Seem Like 600

The Skim

What, exactly, does your media tangibly *become* when you rip a CD or a DVD into a digital media file?

There was a time when that was a meaningless question suitable only for philosophy professors and the insane, who dress better. Now we know beyond any doubt: It turns into a gaseous substance. That's why the iPhone and other media devices are so tightly constructed. It's not so much keeping the moisture out as it is trying to keep the Oingo Boingo *in*.

A gas expands to occupy the full dimension of whatever container you put it in. And so it is for your iPhone. The capacity of an iPhone can be 16, 8, or even 4 gigabytes if you bought it in the very first month of release. And an iPod Touch can have as much as 32 gigs. But the number couldn't matter less. When you upgraded your 8-gig first-generation iPhone to a 16-gig iPhone 3G, you had extra space — until about a week later, when seven days of adding just *one* more movie,

Figure 2-1
Keeping content fresh automatically, thanks to smart playlists

TIDBIT

There's another great trick for making your iPhone *appear* to have more storage than it actually does, particularly if you have the 3G model with its high-speed digital connection. Instead of syncing music and podcasts to your iPhone, why not just leave that stuff on the hard drive or a remote server, and stream it through the Internet?

Rather than subscribing to the podcast in iTunes, you *bookmark* the podcast's RSS feed in Safari. Tap on the name of an episode in the browser, and the iPhone connects and starts playing. In place of wasting a gigabyte of precious iPhone space on videos or albums that are only *just* desirable enough to keep handy, toss 'em into the folder of a network storage service like Box.net. Connect to your folder by logging in to the service, and then one tap starts "A Boy And His Dog" playing.

You'll find all the details in the "RSS Feeds" and "Taking Your Data With You" chapters.

podcast, or playlist reintroduced you to the "Some Files Could Not Be Copied" error.

Yes, if Apple were truly being square with you, instead of "16 gigabytes" the package would simply read "Capacity: Not nearly enough." The iPhone doesn't have a card slot or any way to physically add more memory, but iTunes and the iPhone contain enough powerful features that the physical capacity of the device can be rendered all but meaningless.

STRETCHING STORAGE WITH SMART PLAYLISTS

In fact, I have three different music players. My desktop iTunes library contains nearly a terabyte of movies and music. My iPod has its 160-gig drive, and it's packed to the gills. And then I have my 16-gig iPhone. Yet when it comes to a simple question of the breadth of content, the listening experience with the iPhone is just about the same as what I enjoy with any other player.

Why? Because practically all the content on my iPhone is managed with smart playlists. Instead of assembling static lists of music and videos, I merely describe the *kind* of stuff that iTunes should maintain on my phone at all times. iTunes keeps churning the content with each night's sync. So while my iPhone only has 16 gigabytes of storage, the end-effect is that iTunes is projecting a constantly moving 16-gig window of content

Figure 2-2
My daily dose of podcasts

from a media library that's more than 100 times larger.

I mean, think about it: It would take me *months* of nonstop listening to go through all the stuff on my iPod. Which is nice, if you have the sort of job where you can take that much time off for personal projects, but I rarely go more than, say, two days before I dock my iPhone back to my desktop. Every sync is another chance for iTunes to close the curtains and make sure there's a whole new scene in place by the time the curtains go up on the next act.

Figure 2-1 shows you a typical example of a playlist.

It's dead simple but awesomely powerful. You can translate this playlist's mandate as "This playlist should only contain music that I really, really like and which I haven't played in more or less forever." It selects only music rated 4 or 5 stars, and puts the least recently played tracks into the playlist first.

It's the last bit that delivers the punch. Obviously, since this playlist contains only awesome music — I've titled it "Only Awesome Music" just to underscore the point — I use it a lot in the car. But as soon as I get home and dock my iPhone, every track that I listened to during the 20-minute drive to MIT, the 20 minute drive back home, and the 73 minutes spent orbiting Cambridge looking for a parking spot, is removed and

replaced with *another* top-favorite track that I haven't played in ages.

iTunes will keep digging through your library, looking for lost treasures.

That criteria is also useful when it's set to maintain a playlist of your library's freshest content. It's particularly good at maintaining a playlist of new podcasts (see Figure 2-2).

Another simple playlist, it just looks for tracks whose genre is "Podcast" and chooses the recently added gigabyte's worth, from among those podcasts that I haven't heard yet.

This approach is actually more useful than

TIP

The second big boon of a podcast playlist is that I can just push Play and all my new podcasts play one after the other. It's nice that the iPhone automatically arranges all its podcasts under its own special button, but as soon as it reaches the end of a three-minute segment of KRCW's *Martini Shot*, it stops dead, ignorant of the fact that I still have an hour drive ahead of me and Kevin Smith's *SmodCast* would fit that gap quite nicely.
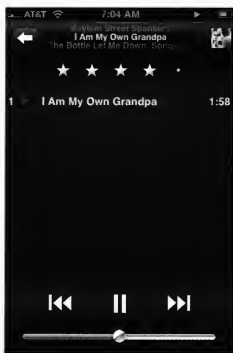
Figure 2-3
Seeing stars: rating the music on your iPhone

relying on the iPhone music player app's built-in Podcasts button. I think Apple's feature is way too, too — sorry, which side of the brain is it that handles all the Spock-like logical thinking? It's too That Side of the Brain. When I jump in my car or go for a walk, I'm not explicitly thinking about the most recent episode of *The Bugle*. I'm thinking it's time to listen to today's new podcasts, whatever they are.

And bip. I tap my Freshest Podcasts playlist and there they are.

Bonus: This method, unlike Apple's, is not *insane*. Why the devil does the iPhone play *one* episode and then stop? I pull out

of my driveway and before I even get onto a two-lane road, the three-minute episode of Rob Long's *Martini Shot* is over and I'm left hanging.

I use these smart playlists to manage all my content. I still have a handful of manual playlists — chiefly, a playlist of "must have" albums and videos that I always want to have handy — but everything else is selected and synced to my phone automatically.

I have about a dozen smart playlists covering every genre and situation, and by using the smart playlist's Limit to X Gigabytes option, I can keep my iPhone partitioned. I always have 4 gigs of music I haven't heard in eons: 2 gigs of recently added movies, the latest 2 gigs of movies, 500 megs of Jazz, 1 gig of classical, 1.5 gigs of rock, and a combined 500 gigs of country and bluegrass.

THE RATING GAME

This technique becomes much more powerful once you've started applying ratings to *all* your music. Most people never get around to doing this, even though it's pretty easy. In iTunes, you just click the Rating column next to the track, and assign it from 1 to 5 stars. On your iPhone, you tap the album art twice while the track is playing, and then illuminate the appropriate number of stars with a second tap (see Figure 2-3).

But it's a pain to go through all that for hundreds or even thousands or tens of thousands of tracks. But a smart playlist can actually automate the entire action. Figure 2-4 shows a typical smart playlist.

This smart playlist hunts for Rock music that I haven't rated yet. If I get in the habit of listening to this playlist as I take my morning constitutional and noting my galvanic skin response as the first chords ring through my

Smart Playlist		
☑ Match all ⬍ of the following rules:		
Genre ⬍	contains ⬍	Rock	⊖ ⊕
Rating ⬍	is ⬍		⊖ ⊕
☑ Limit to 50 items ⬍ selected by random ⬍		
☐ Match only checked items		
☑ Live updating		
		Cancel OK
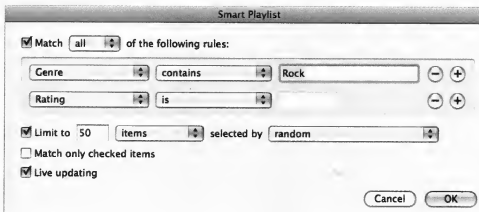
Figure 2-4

Hey, now you're a rock star! Or you will be, after putting this smart playlist into regular rotation.

headphones, I'll eventually get every last one of my Rock tracks duly starred.

It's like dog training, really. There's a positive reinforcement/reward for taking a moment to tap the screen and register my opinion. Because this is the only playlist I listen to for the whole hour, and if I want that unrated Neil Diamond song to *finally* go away, the *only* way to accomplish that is to assign that inevitable one, lonely star so that iTunes will replace it with something that I *didn't* buy as a joke.

It really didn't take long before I'd tagged thousands of tracks. I'm still barely a third of the way through rating my entire library, but I'm already reaping huge rewards: there are times during a long ride when you want to be challenged with obscure tracks that shine a light on your preconceptions about art. But then there are those times when you just want to pump your fist in the air and yell "She LOVES youuuu yeahhh, Yeahhh, YEAHH, *YEAHHHHH!!!!*"

You can't really make that happen without having some ratings in your library.

So honestly, I can't say that I have any complaints whatsoever about the lack of a hard drive in my iPhone, or the lack of a card slot (which is something you find in most other smartphones). Even a year later, with

17

the iPhone's ginchiness confirmed by over eighty U.N.-signatory nations, there are still folks who complain that the iPhone has no card slot.

"Turn out your pockets," I said to one complainer. He'd really pushed me too far.

"What?"

"Right now. All of them. Let's see *everything* you have in your pockets. Because if the fact that the iPhone doesn't have a slot for additional storage cards really *is* a total deal breaker for you, then you absolutely *must* be carrying more than 8 or 16 gigs of memory cards on you. If you aren't, then you're talking through your hat. And if you *are*, do you *really* prefer swapping cards three times in order to listen to *Quadrophenia* all the way through?

PART II

The Real World

3

Ripping CDs

The Skim

I promise you it's true: I held an actual CD in my hands. Just last week, in fact.

It was a little freaky. Kind of like that point in the guided tour of a zoo where you get to touch a boa constrictor. It's a little colder and stickier than you thought it was. I mean, I didn't freak out or anything — but still, it was an exciting enough moment that I couldn't stop talking about it to my friends for days afterward.

("And it actually had a little *book* inside it! On paper and everything! With pictures, and lyrics. And Bono had, like, a *lot* of things to say about the situation in Costa Rica, but the text was teensy-tiny so I'm not really sure precisely what kind of trouble the folks down there are in. It still made me want to send the guy a lot of money, though.")

A whole generation is growing up without ever having had to remove the shrinkwrap and those sticky strips from the edges of a brand-new CD. So if they're angry, resentful, violent, and despondent over the ability of a remorseful corporation to inflict wanton distress and suffering upon an innocent populace, then they'll need to find a new scapegoat.

For all the benefits of buying music online and downloading it via podcast and directly from bands' Web sites, the CD still offers lots of practical advantages over any other method. I shall start you off by

Figure 3-1
Opening a CD in iTunes

mentioning that at this writing, one and only Stan Freberg track is available from the iTunes Store. I suppose there might be others, but really, do they matter?

iTunes makes it dead simple to convert CDs into digital music files. But there are subtleties that you ought to know about, particularly before you eye the 700 discs in your collection and begin a heroic month long ripping campaign.

THE RIP

Okey-doke. Just stick a CD in the drive and after your machine has taken a moment to comprehend that it now has to deal with a copy of *Howard Jones Greatest Hits*, iTunes opens the CD for playback and presents

you with a list of tracks (see Figure 3-1) and (unless some little norbert has unchecked this option) asks if you want to import the CD.

If you push iTunes's Play button it'll play these tracks straight off the CD, but we're living in the exciting Push-Button World of Tomorrow, not the leaden gaslight-and-spats era of the mid-Nineties: we want to make music files.

Turning all those tracks into digital music files is a complicated process consisting of:

1. Push the button marked Import CD, found in the lower-right corner of the iTunes window (see Figure 3-2).
2. (Optional) Go down to the kitchen and microwave a Hot Pockets or something while the tracks are converted to

music files and added to your iTunes library.

Because honestly, that's all there is to it.

All right, in truth, I desperately wanted to reduce it to one step, so I wantonly chose to gloss over the fact that if there are any tracks on this disc that you don't want on the CD, you can just un-check them by clicking on the checkbox next to the tracks' names. I mean, on the off-chance that the artists who created this CD failed to ensure that every single track was a timeless classic that plucks the soul strings of the zeitgeist and helps us all to coalesce into a more powerful understanding of our collective force-of-idealism as a Society.

As you enjoy your Hot Pockets, you might pass the time by noting some of the things that are going on in the window (see Figure 3-3):

Figure 3-2
The Import button, a.k.a. All You Need To Know

Figure 3-3
The rip-in-progress

Figure 3-4
Spitting out the disc

- The window's status display shows you which track is currently being imported, how far along the process has come, and, if you're the sort of person who likes to brag about how fast your computer is, the speed of the rip. Here, iTunes is pleased to report that it's converting the track thirteen times faster than it'd take to play it.

- I'm your friend, so I'll take this moment to quietly tell you that *nobody* is impressed with the speed of your new computer. Honest. They're feigning interest while they scan the room for someone else to talk to. Your friends used to think that this sort of behavior was amusing, in a tragic sort of way, but now they say that they can no longer sit by and watch you strut out time and time again talking about your new laptop, your hybrid car, the new watch you

bought for marathon training, et cetera. "The best way to talk is to *listen*," they urge you. I concur heartily. They're not trying to embarrass you. They just don't want you to be so terribly *lonely*, that's all.

- On the left side of the tracklist, next to the track numbers, you'll see little green checkmark icons that represent completed tracks, an orange one next to the track that's being ripped right now, and colorful expanses of absolutely nothing next to those tracks that have yet to be processed, glistening with the promise of digital files yet to come.

- There's a tiny X button on the right side of iTunes's status display. Click it to abort the rip-in-progress and cancel all the tracks due to be ripped.

- Unless you've turned that particular feature off in iTunes's Preferences panel, iTunes will start playing the ripped tracks as soon as the first one is complete. Click the Stop button to knock that off.

TIDBIT

Ripping your first disc is simple. It's the remaining 992 in your collection that are going to sting. Fortunately, there are lots of services out there that will rip all your CDs for you.

You ship 'em the discs, they ship 'em all back accompanied by a few DVDs filled with iTunes-compatible music files. These services are popping up all over the place, but if you want to check out pricing, RipTopia (riptopia.com) and MusicShifter (musicshifter.com) are good places to start.

Once iTunes has finished ripping the disc, you can eject it from your computer by clicking the little Eject button next to the CD's name in the Devices list on the left side of the iTunes window (see Figure 3-4), the big Eject button in the lower-right corner of the iTunes window, or by pressing the Eject button on your keyboard or on your CD drive will accomplish the same thing.

And I'm proud to say that here, 95 percent of my job as an instructionalist writer is done. Nothin' left for me to do here but clear up a few trims and ends, most of which orbit the theme of "Why Did This Go Wretchedly Wrong?"
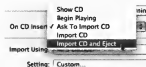
Figure 3-5
Turning your computer into a ripping station

TROUBLESHOOTING

But this world is a vale of tears, and even in a simple, flawless and foolproof process like iTunes CD ripping, a little rain must fall.

The Disc Didn't Appear in iTunes

If the disc doesn't show up in iTunes, there are usually two possible answers:

○ The disc is way too baffed-up for your CD drive to recognize it. I mean, for Heaven's sake, man you felt your chair roll over it *twice*, and yet you weren't over it a third time before you picked it up. That's going to cost you a new copy of *Rubber Soul*, my friend.

○ The disc isn't an audio CD.

"Not an audio CD," eh? Interesting. Usually, this means that the publisher chose to save a little time by burning a CD-R or a DVD-R of digital music files. Open the disc in Windows Explorer or the Mac OS Finder and see what files are there. If it's loaded with documents with .mp3 or .aac or other music-ish filename extensions, then you can just drag those files straight into the iTunes window and they'll be added to your music library without any further ado.

Sometimes, though — and if you listen carefully, you can hear my teeth grinding as I type these words — it's because the CD has been intentionally corrupted by the publisher. Which brings us to . . .

Dealing with "Copy-Protected" CDs

And I put those words in quotes because it's nonsense. If you have legally purchased a CD, then you have the right to rip its tracks into digital music files. Period. It's a right that's specifically included in US copyright

law. Moreover, the music industry has tried time and time again to weaken this provision or specify cases in which it doesn't matter, and time and time again, the courts have smacked them in their collective nose with a rolled-up newspaper and told them to sleep outside tonight.

So the recording industry's response to these defeats has been to flirt with the idea o "corrupting" some of their most popular titles just enough that computers don't recognize them as audio CDs. Which is to call it a fool's errand; the CD standard is called a Standard for a good reason: because, um, when it fails to conform to the standard, it no longer meets the standard.

(In other words: There's now a good chance that this disc won't play in a car CD changer, or the CD boombox that you bought a few years ago, or in any audio CD player anywhere.)

These discs are rare — I think even they are capable of understanding that these schemes don't really work, and only result in consumer backlash — but all the same, *why* did they ever go to all this trouble? I don't know. I've never drunk a pint of raw ether so I lack the ability to process thoughts in quite the same way as a music company executive. "To prevent piracy" is the usual smokescreen, but in truth the goal is to assert more control over what you can do with the music that you own. I bought one copy of The Who's *Who's Next* fifteen years ago and because I never lost or ruined it, and I've converted the disc to crisp, perfect digital files, it's likely that I'll never buy another copy. This presents A Problem for the record industry.

Onward.

There are limits to how angry I can get about copy-protected CDs because none of

> ### TIP
>
> If you're settling down to rip dozens or hundreds of discs instead of a handful, iTunes has a hidden feature to speed things along. Choose Edit ▶ Preference in Windows and iTunes ▶ Preferences on the Mac. Click the Advanced tab, and then click the Importing subtab (see Figure 3-5).
>
> Click the On CD Insert pop-up menu and you'll reveal a frisky item named Import Songs And Eject. It's tailor-made for processing CDs in bulk: Whenever it sees a disc, it rips all the tracks and then spits it out again, hungry for more.
>
> You can rip a 1,000-CD collection with little visible effort by merely keeping a stack of discs near the computer and getting in the habit of sticking in a new disc whenever a ripped disc is sticking out of the drive.

the systems currently in play actually work. Here's how to get around nearly any copy-protection scheme:

If you're a Windows user:

1. Hold down the Shift key while inserting the CD.

And you're done. Most of these anti-copying schemes work by sticking an invisible piece of Windows software on the disc that runs automatically when Windows mounts the CD. The sole purpose of this app is to prevent the disc's contents from being ripped. But holding down the Shift key tells Windows to ignore any auto-run software on the disc.

Figure 3-6
The untitled symphony

Figure 3-7
Let iTunes's
fingers do the
typing.

You should also refuse to install any "bonus" software included on the disc. Often, the "special video footage" or the "special access to an exclusive Web site offer is actually a Trojan horse. The CD will also install a permanent piece of software on your PC that will eternally look out for CDs published by that same company and prevent you from ripping its tracks into your music library.

If you're a Mac user, the solution is simpler still:

...

Yeah, you don't have to do anything at all. These copy-prevention schemes are almost always keyed to work on Windows machines only. Macs will mount the disc and rip its tracks without any complaint.

I hate to keep going on and on about this (oh, what a *lie*, Ihnatko!), but I can't help myself. The whole point of introducing all this malicious spyware and corrupting discs so that they won't play on "real" CD players was (allegedly) to prevent these tracks from winding up on the Internet. Does the record-

ing industry believe that Mac users don't have access to the Internet, and they're all so noble and pure that none of them would ever illegally post a song on a file-sharing service? So the companies have inconvenienced thousands of paying customers, with absolutely no benefit. Idiots!

All the Tracks Are Untitled

Magically, iTunes fills in the title of the CD and the names and artists of each track for you. This particular mojo is powered by a massive online database containing info about very nearly (accent on "very nearly") every CD ever made. If you have an Internet connection, iTunes automatically connects to the database and asks, "Have you ever heard of this CD before?" and grabs the info it needs.

If something goes wrong, you'll see the unhappy state of affairs represented by Figure 3-6.

If you didn't have an Internet connection available when you ripped the disc, don't sweat it. The next time you're Net-studly, select those tracks and then click Advanced ▸ Get CD Track Names (see Figure 3-7).

It's possible, however, that you are the first human on this planet to ever purchase and rip this specific CD. In which case the database doesn't *have* any album, artist, or track info on file. You'll have to add that stuff yourself.

1. Select the first track in the album.
2. Choose File ▸ Get Info.
3. Click on the Info tab of the window.

4. You'll be presented with the little form you see in Figure 3-8. Laboriously copy all that info from the back of the CD. When you finish one track, click the Next button to move on to the next track.

If you select more than one track before clicking Get Info, iTunes will (after a curt warning that this might be a bad idea) allow you to edit the info for all those tracks at once. The album, year, genre, and maybe even the artist and composer won't change from track to track, so it's a good way to save some time. But you need to dismiss that window and then edit each track individually to add the specific track titles.

And this is your reward for supporting struggling independent artists. Because honestly, the only CDs that aren't in the Gracenote CDDB are coffee-shop performers who self-produce CDs in the dozens or hundreds at best. Every commercial CD is already in there, no matter how bizarre. To produce Figure 3-6, I dug out my copy of *The Beatles on Panpipes*, a gag gift I bought

for a Beatle fan pal then didn't have the courage to actually give him. But no, a disc of panpipe-based Beatle covers had already been processed and added to the database.

(Stuck for a solution, I eventually realized that I could accomplish what I wanted if I simply turned off my notebook's Wi-Fi for a few minutes. Me Am #1 Clever Technology Writer of All.)

Once you've finished all that work, you *could* demonstrate that you're a responsible and contributing member of Society by selecting the tracks and choosing Advanced ▶ Submit CD Track Names. This will update the CDDB with the info you've just added to iTunes, and potentially the rest of the world will benefit from your labors, in perpetuity. Not the best legacy you can leave, but it's more than some people will ever contribute, I suppose.

CHOOSING A MUSIC FORMAT

Okey-doke. Just give me a moment to prepare a damp washcloth and clean all that

TROUBLE

Just to demonstrate what sort of egg-sucking weasels we're dealing with here:

One major music publisher hid a *major* piece of spyware on all its major releases. Not only did it prevent you from copying tracks but it also kept tabs on your listening habits.

And the kicker: it was installed using a technique that made the software (a) difficult to detect, (b) almost impossible to remove without destroying your whole system, and (c) open a major hole in the security of your PC.

Naturally, hackers discovered this and started to deploy malicious software of their own, designed to exploit the gaping hole created by the record company's spyware.

They *all* deserve to go through life in itchy underwear. And to have something heavy dropped on them from a great height.
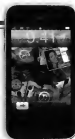
vitreous spittle off of my screen so I can proceed.

There. That's better. We've come this far and we've only used a handful of acronyms. But they're all friendly and familiar ones: CD, PC, even LP, for the love of Mike.

Take a deep breath, because it's time to knock you down and pummel you with MP3, AAC, VBR, and other key players in the Obfuscation Hit Parade.

When you convert CD tracks into music files, there are a few different goals you want to achieve:

○ **You want the tracks to sound good.**
We shall refer to this as the "Duh" Imperative.

○ **You want files that don't take up a whole lot of space.** Because you have a limited amount of space on your iPhone, and if iTunes is creating music files that are twice as big as they need to be, then your iPhone can only hold half as many tracks as it should.

○ **You don't want to go through this bloody mess of ripping dozens, if not hundreds, of CDs all over again for any reason.** A subtler point, this, but nonetheless it's something to consider. You are a luminous being, one of the Beloveds of the Universe, my child; your destiny is a long one and unless you're reading this book while driving a car, it's likely that you're going to be on this planet for many years to come.

"But wait," you're now thinking, after fully digesting the "Beloved of the Universe" line. "That means I really *shouldn't* get the spaceship from *Battlestar Galactica* tattooed across

my back, because although *right now* I think it's the most awesome show ever, and that it really sums up my outlook and philosophy of life, maybe I'll feel differently ten years from now!" Indeed it does. That's not where I was going with that, but I'm glad that you're gleaning bits of incidental wisdom from this book.

So before you rip that Strokes CD, you ought to picture yourself six months from now, when you've bought a doohickey that lets you plug your iPhone into your big home stereo system; or a year from now, when you have an AppleTV or some other box that can wirelessly transmit music from your computer to any set of speakers anywhere in the house; or a phone with a decent music player.

If you make the right choices today, you can create music files that will play on your iPhone or iPod Touch (fab), but also nearly any sort of digital audio device or accessory that you might put your
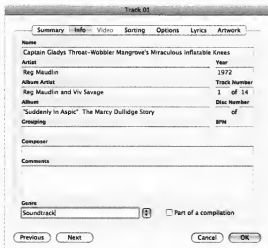
Figure 3-8
Pin the info on the track list, one by one.

hands on in the next five or ten years. It'll come down to:

○ **File format**. You can't stick an 8-track into a CD drive, and with a similar sense of injustice not all devices and software can play every conceivable music file format. You want iTunes to use a file format that will work on the greatest range of stuff.

○ **Sound quality**. "Hey, this file sounds great" is a relative term. Bruce Vilanch humming the score from *The Magnificent Seven* would sound great, too, through those crappy white earbuds that you got free with the iPhone. iTunes will always make certain sacrifices and trade-offs when converting a CD track into a music file, and often they're only apparent when you listen

Figure 3-9
Modifying iTunes's default settings for ripping music

through a halfway decent set of home speakers. And look, if you've ripped a large CD collection into iTunes, one of the first things you want to do is enjoy your music collection through your stereo. That's a bad time to discover that iTunes ripped all your tracks at the Bruce Vilanch setting.

The Settings That I Think You Ought to Use

I'm betting that you're interested more in immediate gratification than technical detail. So let's lead off with the tweaks I think you ought to make to iTunes's default music-ripping settings. You can access these settings by choosing Edit ▶ Preferences in Windows, and iTunes ▶ Preferences on a Macintosh. Click the Advanced tab, and then click the Importing tab (see Figure 3-9).

You set the file format through the Import Using pop-up menu. The default choice is AAC Encoder and you ought to leave it as-is. But change the Setting to Higher Quality (256 kbps).

There it is: Rip all your tracks to the AAC file format, using a sample rate of 256 kbps. I think that's the sweet spot that gives you terrific-sounding files that will play on a huge variety of devices but won't choke the capacity of your iPhone.

Now let's snap on a pair of latex gloves and get into a more exhaustive explanation.

File Formats

iTunes can rip music into a boatload of different formats:

○ **MP3**. MP3 is the Band-Aid of digital music. It's a specific format, but it's so old and so ubiquitous that world tends

to use that word when it is really just referring to digital music files in general. And here you see the big advantage of MP3: practically every piece of software and hardware created by anybody who breathes the customary Human mixture of oxygen, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen gases can handle an MP3 file, whether it's a music player on a cellphone or a piece of software that lets you edit your home movies and create your own soundtracks.

○ **AAC.** The Advanced Audio Coding format was what the industry created after digital music took off. It was the collective answer to the question "How can we make MP3 suck less?" Which is not to say that MP3 *sucks*. But it has a pretty shallow bag of tricks. AAC was developed a few years later and with a few years of additional experience compressing music. The upshot is that AAC Files Sound Better Than MP3s And They Take Up Less Space. Well, generally speaking, that is. Do keep in mind that there are wonks out there who absolutely insist that they can hear the difference between an LP and a CD. And ultra-ultra-wonks who claim that they can tell you what kind of metal was used in your speaker wires. If you're at a party, you're meant to be dancing, not scrutinizing the music for time resolution and scale factor artifacts. You can indeed make an MP3 that sounds as good as an AAC file, but it'll still probably take up more space.

○ **AIFF and Apple Lossless.** I'm grouping these two together because they fill the same function: to create the most perfect copy of the original CD

track possible. Absolutely no sacrifices whatsoever will be made in the name of quality. This is a *good* bit rate thing if you're truly trying to archive your CDs permanently, creating a library of "masters" that you can burn duplicates from for years to come. This is a *bad* thing if you're truly trying to get more than, say, three songs to fit on your iPhone at once. Sacrifices have to be made *somewhere*, and if you're not willing to sacrifice sound quality you're going to have to sacrifice file size to the max. Yes indeed, surely on this side of Jerusalem none suffer as you suffer. Just move on.

○ **WAV.** The iPhone supports this format and so I suppose I'm begrudgingly required to report that yes, iTunes can rip to this format, too. But why on *earth* would you want to? WAV files are really big, they sound like a used coffee filter, and they're really only used by music producers who haven't bought new recording and mixing software in the past five years. Avoid.

Why I Choose AAC: It comes down to just AAC and MP3, and MP3's sole advantage is that it's a bit more widely supported. But it's a negligible advantage and even that minor gap continues to narrow. As a beloved industry columnist I have dozens of devices here in my office that play digital music files, and the only thing I have that can play MP3s but not AAC files is a bizarre wristwatch music player that I got as a party favor.

Sound Quality

When we talk about sound quality, we're really talking about the bit rate that iTunes uses when it converts a track into a music file. A higher bit rate translates into more

detail. A happy face is a picture of your Uncle Sid ripped at the lowest possible bit rate. A moderate bit rate is a cartoon that looks like him. Higher, and it's a drawing that looks *exactly* like him. An image of Sid at the highest possible bit rate is a photo.

When you set the bit rate, you're telling iTunes "Here's how much detail you can put into every second of the music file." As you might have guessed, though, when you increase the bit rate, that extra detail amounts to a larger file. A track that was ripped with iTunes's default 128 kbps bit rate won't sound as good as the same track ripped at 256 kbps, but it'll take up half as much space on your iPhone and leave room for more music.

Bit rates are frustrating because they're so subjective. A drop in detail that one listener won't even notice will render a song unlistenable by another. And some songs are practically bulletproof. You can compress them down to nearly nothing without inflicting any damage on 'em.

Why I Choose 256 kbps: Honestly? Because (a) I use smart playlists so the need to have the greatest possible quantity of music on my iPhone, and (b) my new iPhone 3G now has 16 gigabytes of storage instead of the 8 gigs in my original one. When you're using the AAC format, 128 kbps is just fine for damned-near every piece of music you throw at it. But if you rip a wide range of music styles (rock, folk, classical, skate-metal) and you listen to enough music, you will inevitably be lying there on the sofa, listening to a quiet piece played on acoustic instruments, and you'll realize that on *this* track and in *this* passage, a rich, thready violin sounds a bit, well I dunno, mushy? I'd come up with a better

word for it but the defect has already gone away, apparently, and it didn't really last long enough for me to focus on it.

It's a problem of philosophy. You're going to be ripping all your music into iTunes. If you're unhappy with the sound quality later on, there's nothing you can do about it except rip it all over again at a higher setting. I have over two terabytes of storage on my Mac, and my iPhone can hold more music than I can possibly listen to in a whole month. I'm willing to put up with slightly larger music files if it means that a violin always sounds like a violin.

But since we're ripping with an iPhone or iPod Touch in mind — devices that don't have a beefy hard drive — be prepared to be flexible. I do think it's worth it to rip music at a higher bit rate, but if you're ripping a book on tape, drop the bit rate down to 96 kbps or lower. It could be the difference between a three-hour file fitting on your device along with your other tracks or having to leave it home. F. Murray Abraham has a fine voice and you don't need to hear it at maximum quality to follow all the plot points of the latest Danielle Steele bodice-ripper. So before you rip that *particular* disc, open the Importing preferences and choose Spoken Podcast from the Setting pop-up menu. Just remember to restore iTunes to its previous bit rate settings when you're done. Remember, these settings will apply to every track you rip.

Regard me as a member of the Sadder-But-Wiser club. The year I added my first truly humongous drive to my desktop was the year I was determined to finally rip every last track of every last CD I owned into iTunes, nearly 800 in all.

Using the Import Songs and Eject set-

ting, I set up a laptop near the door to my office and kept a bin of CDs underneath. For a whole month, any time I crossed the threshold for any reason whatsoever, I would remove a "done" CD from the drive and replace it with a fresh one from the bin. At the end, the drive held a majestic 14,000 songs.

And then I had to do them all over again. Because I got this great little wireless box that streamed music files from iTunes anywhere in the house. But it didn't like the file format I chose, and the bit rate was low enough that the difference was surprisingly noticeable when played through the good speakers downstairs.

Which is why my personal library has been ripped even more conservatively than I've advised you guys. Maximum possible bit rate, maximum possible compatibility. I've ripped 14,000 songs twice now and if I have to do it a third time, damnit, it's going to be done by a trained monkey in a little uniform.

4

Ripping DVDs

The Skim

There are times when I am *so* relieved that I don't get to ask Apple's CEO any questions directly when he gives a big keynote address promoting the company's products and services.

"And the iTunes Store continues to be an immense success, quickly becoming the industry's largest seller of downloadable movies," Steve Jobs boasted in a recent keynote. "Why, at this moment, the store has more than *300* feature-length films available for download!"

Applause, applause. And then my hand would go up.

"Yes, Ihnatko, there at the back?"

"Thanks. Um, I just wanted to know why the devil anybody should be impressed with 300 titles? I mean, I *own* 300 commercial DVDs. Aren't there, like, over 100,000 movies available on DVD or something? And even if you *do* see a movie in the iTunes Store that you actually want, well it's hardly a bargain, is it? It's just two or three dollars less than what I could pay for the DVD at Best Buy and *that* comes with four hours of bonus material."

This is the point at which I'm thrown into a big sack and dragged from the hall.

Well, those are the chances that a man in my position (sitting cross-legged on a sofa with a wireless keyboard in my lap) must take if he's to uphold his mandate to his readers. No, you *shouldn't* be impressed with

mere hundreds of downloadable movies at the iTunes Store. You *shouldn't* be content with saving $4 off the cost of a $17 DVD that comes with bonus material, outtakes, commentary tracks, and all sort of goodies that you don't get with the downloaded version.

Not when there's a terrific tool for both PCs and Macs that can convert any DVD — commercial or burned on your home DVD recorder — to an iPhone-able movie file. *Double*-not, considering that this tool is free, free, and dare I say free.

IS THIS LEGAL?

Oh, legal, legal, *legal!* I swear! Is following the system of laws that keeps our Democracy in place *all* that you care about?

It is?

Good. Just checking. My iPhone currently has three movies on it, and not one of them is available for legal download anywhere. This leads some people to conclude that in fact downloaded them *illegally*, from any one of hundreds of naughty file-sharing sites.

Nope. And I'll tell you why: It's just plain wrong. No sarcasm, jokes, or subtle winks. If you want it, you have to have the legal right to use it. In the case of movies, that means either buying the DVD at the store, or recording it off cable. (And you *are* paying for cable, right?)

Once you've obtained a legal copy of the movie (or TV show, or cartoon, or…), you have every right to make a copy that you can play on your iPhone. U.S. copyright law outlines several scenarios under which you can duplicate copyrighted material and it's right there in black and white: If you own it, you can copy it from one medium (such as a DVD) to another (such as a movie file). So

it's all perfectly legal.

Pretty much.

As far as anyone can tell.

The only problem is that there's this *other* bit of the law, added in the Nineties, which says that if a publisher has put some sort of mojo on the recording to prevent copying, then it's illegal to break that copy-protection.

So on the one hand, the law says you have every right to copy that movie; on the other hand, it says that you're not really allowed to *exercise* that right.

So which part of the law wins? I dunno. A law hasn't received its official bar mitzvah until it's been tested in court, and either upheld or overturned. Naturally, the very last thing that the recording industry wants is for a judge to explicitly underscore consumers' rights to copy movies regardless of the publisher's desire, so they've never dared do anything about any DVD-copying done at the consumer level.

Instead, they've satisfied themselves with making it *extremely* difficult for a company to sell software that breaks the encryption on commercial discs.

But where there's a will — or a world of people with empty iPhones, iPods, and other video players — there's a way.

RIPPING WITH HANDBRAKE

The great friend to the freedom-loving proletariat is a free app, available for both Windows *and* the Mac OS, known as Hand-Brake.

It's nearly impossible for the movie industry to shut this app down (as they have so successfully with so many other such apps) because — get this — no one company owns it or profits from it. It's "open source" software, which means that it's built, main-
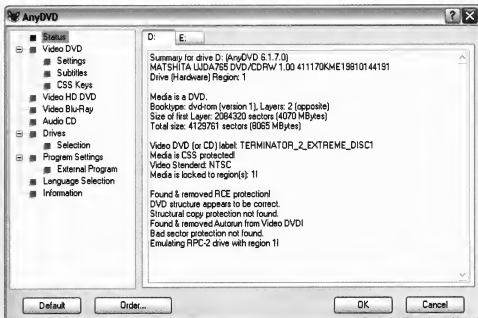
Figure 4-1
SlySoft's AnyDVD tames even the most savagely copy-protected commercial DVD.

tained, updated, and distributed by the worldwide community of software developers. You might as well try to sue the stink off a donkey; it's everywhere and nowhere, so there's no real target.

You can download a copy of HandBrake for either Windows or Mac from the app's official site: http://handbrake.fr/.

Both versions share the same user interface. And they *very nearly* share all the same features. The Windows version is missing just one teensy (but I think you'll agree "vital") feature: the ability to convert commercial copy-protected DVDs in addition to the ones you burn at home.

Mac users, take a smoke break or something. Me and the Windows people need to figure out a way around this no-DVD-burning issue.

DECRYPTING WITH SLYSOFT'S ANYDVD

All righty. Good news, sensation-seekers, because Slysoft (slysoft.com) has come to the rescue with a rather simple and awesome little app: AnyDVD. It'll cost you €49 (that's euros, that funny colored money in Europe) but it's a magical app and it's well-worth the dough.

AnyDVD does one thing. It does it well, and it does it invisibly: It breaks the copy-protection on commercial DVDs and bamboozles Windows into thinking it's just an ordinary, plane-Jane disc.

For the sake of completeness, and to take advantage of the lovely color layout of this book, I'll go ahead and show you what AnyDVD looks like. Take a gander at Figure 4-1.

This is the window that comes up if you

click on the little cartoon fox that AnyDVD puts in your system tray. But honestly, it's just there to satisfy your curiosity and to confirm that it's working. Whenever you insert a DVD, AnyDVD grabs it before Windows or any other app ever sees it. It silently performs the mojo required to break the copy-protection on the disc, and *then* it presents it to the operating system.

From that point onward, any time any app makes a request for some of the data on the DVD, it goes through AnyDVD. It decrypts the data and passes it along to the app that wanted it, without the app's knowledge. It's as though Pixar decided to actually, you know, *trust* you by selling you a copy of *The Incredibles* without any copy-protection to begin with.

BACK TO HANDBRAKE

Welcome back, Mac people. Why does HandBrake for Mac contain the magical DVD-unlocking mojo and not the Windows edition? Because there are, like, a jillion more Windows machines out there than Macs and the movie industry's lawyers don't particularly care about you. So don't get all smug there, Mac people.

In any event, we're all now on the same page. We all have HandBrake running on our computers and it is capable of converting commercial discs. Figure 4-2 shows you the Mac version of HandBrake; we'll be using it for all the examples that follow.

Converting a DVD just takes four steps:

1. Point HandBrake at the DVD. You do this by clicking the Browse button and then either selecting the disc in the file browser or navigating directly to the VIDEO_TS folder on the disc.

2. Tell HandBrake that you'd like the app to prepare a video file that's optimized
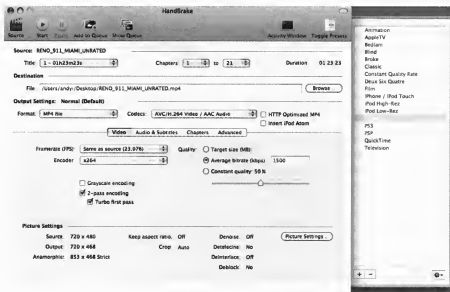
Figure 4-2
HandBrake in action

TROUBLE

I know that you're not here to feel sorry for me — though frankly, any pity you can throw my way is heartily appreciated — but it's probably worth pointing out how bloody difficult it is to write about DVD rippers that run on Windows.

In the year and a half I've been writing about this stuff, I've embraced and lost

at least three different and terrific apps.

One by one, like the crewmembers of the *USS Enterprise* who join Kirk, Spock, and the rest of the "name" cast on dangerous missions, these apps have been picked off by the movie industry's weasels.

For example, SlySoft makes a lovely little app called CloneDVD that does everything that HandBrake

does. But it costs $40 and I can't really count on them selling it a year from now.

Why? Because it's Ensign McDonnell. It's wearing a red shirt and it's just been sent off to investigate that strange noise coming from that rock that looks like it has a mouth and teeth.

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for the iPhone. In Windows, you do this by selecting Presets ▶ iPhone or just selecting it from the panel of presets on the right side of the window. On the Mac, you'll find the presets in the drawer on the right-hand side of the window, which you can open by clicking the Toggle Presets button if it isn't open already. HandBrake will choose all the settings that are appropriate for a video file playing on your iPhone.

3. Choose the content that you want to convert by making a selection from the Title pop-up menu. A disc's content is chopped up into several different titles. You don't normally see this organization because you usually navigate through the disc's content from that bouncy menu on your TV. Lurking underneath all that stuff, a DVD might have one title for the main menu animation, a second for the actual movie, a third for a version of the

movie with scenes restored from the director's first cut, that sort of thing. Usually the correct title jumps right out at you. If you're converting *Terminator 2*, your eye's sort of drawn to that one title that says it's two hours and 32 minutes long, especially because you went on IMDB.com and verified the film's running time.

4. Choose a destination for the video file. Give it a good name. HandBrake will choose one for you based on how the title is defined by the disc, but *Apocalypse Now — Redux Edition* is going to make more sense to you than "ANOWR-99." But I suppose I shouldn't assume. Do whatever you want. You're an incorrigible movie pirate; you're a maverick who plays by your own rules! (Well, not really, but it's fun to pretend.)

5. And that's really it. Click Start. And wait.

Lots.

TIDBIT

One note about the Windows edition of HandBrake: It's what's called a ".Net" application. What that means to you is that you'll need Microsoft's free .Net 2.0 framework installed on your PC. Oh, a technical explanation of .Net 2.0? It's, er, a set of little software gremlins that helps .Net 2.0 apps like HandBrake run. It's likely that you already have .Net installed on your PC, but if HandBrake complains when you launch it, you can download .Net for free from Microsoft. The download URL is so big that it'd choke a giraffe so I'll point you to microsoft.com/downloads and tell you to type ".Net framework" into the Search box. The first hit returned will probably be ".Net Framework Version 2.0 Redistributable Package." That's the baby.

If you've recently bought a 5,000-piece jigsaw puzzle, now would be a good time to go back to the store and exchange it for one with 10,000 pieces. Using HandBrake's default iPhone settings, converting a DVD to a movie file can take as long as two or three times the running time of the actual film. If you're running HandBrake on one of those ultra-affordable Windows notebooks with a CPU made from the same sort of stuff that goes into a Cheez-It cracker. Well, suffice to say that the sequel to this movie will be in theaters by the time HandBrake is finished.

HandBrake will end the process by making a snarky comment about how long it

took to finish the conversion. Pretend not to be annoyed and you're done; just drag the file into your iTunes library and presto, it can be synced to your iPhone without any further ado.

The neat thing about HandBrake's iPhone setting is that it's truly one-stop shopping. All the decisions have been made for you and the only thing you really do is figure out whether you'd prefer to pace fitfully or fretfully while your computer works on the problem.

But it has plenty of little tweaks, options, and settings, proving once again that life is a banquet and that we have but to take our seats and dig in:

○ If you're converting a DVD that contains a dozen episodes of a TV series, you need to know about HandBrake's Queue feature. Repeat all the steps above verbatim, and click Add to Queue instead of the button that starts the ripping process. Select the next episode, give it a different name, and click the Add to Queue button. Repeat until you've added all the content you'd like to rip. When you click the Start button, HandBrake will grind on each video in turn, leaving you free to pursue those many humanitarian efforts that you've been putting off for way too long.

○ HandBrake can include any audio track you want. If the movie has several audio tracks (a director's commentary, a foreign language track, etc.) you can select that track from HandBrake's Audio & Subtitles panel (see Figure 4-3). The only trick is that it's up to you to figure out which track is which. The first audio track is always the plain vanilla one, but if there are three additional

audio tracks you'll have to resort to a little bit of trial-and-error to figure out which one is the cast of *Reno: 911!* riffing on the movie in-character, and which one is the actors commenting as themselves.

So if the movie industry has taken such great pains to prevent you from copying DVDs, why is it so bloody easy?

Oh, you'll love this: Because the movie industry was way, *way* too secretive when they developed the encryption method.

The counter-intuitive thing about devel-
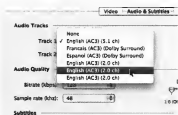
Figure 4-3
Choosing an alternative audio track

oping a brand-new encryption scheme is that the very *last* thing you want to do is perform

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TROUBLE

In Chapter 3, I urged you to think about the world that exists outside your iPhone before you start ripping your entire 1,000-CD music library. Ripping is a hassle-filled, analog process and you only want to do it once. So why not rip your music into a format that sounds great on your home stereo, not just through those cheap plastic earbuds?

Same deal with video. If you use the iPhone preset, your movie will be scaled down to the size of an iPhone screen: 480×256. But! If you select iPod Hi-Res, the resolution bumps up to 640×352. Go for broke? Sure! Select iPhone, and then click the Picture

Settings button. A panel of controls opens and you can click the resolution all the way up to the DVD's maximum: 720×400.

Why wouldn't you want to encode the video at the highest possible quality? Er, because it'll create a ginormous video file and it might not sync to your iPhone or iPod Touch without an extra conversion.

The ginormity problem is obvious: You'll wind up with a 1.5-gigabyte movie instead of a 1-gig version. Meaning, your iPhone will lose three whole episodes of *The Simpsons* worth of storage.

But the "won't play on the iPhone" bit is a hassle as well, sure. An iPhone video can't be wider than 640 pix-

els or taller than 480, and the bit rate — the amount of data that the device can be expected to throw up on the screen per second — can't exceed 1.5 megabits (displayed as 1.5 Mbps). If you stick within those parameters, you'll be good. HandBrake's iPod Hi-Res setting should work fine.

On my most favorite movies and TV shows, I work to get the best of both worlds. I ripped *The Conversation* twice. I made a compact version for my iPhone and a second, spare-no-horses version that looks great when I play it on my living room's huge screen.

TIP

If you have a plane to catch or something, you should choose MPEG-4 Video/AAC Audio from the pop-up list of codecs in the middle of the window. It'll take about half the running time of the original movie. The quality won't be *quite* up to the same level, and it's *possible* that the video won't be compatible with all iPhones and iPods. But at least it leaves you with hope.

your work in secret. You want to share your efforts with the crypto community at every stage, and allow as many people as possible to peer at it from every conceivable angle. In short, you want people to *try* to break it early on, before you commit to this system and you've lost the ability to make it stronger.

But no, the same industry that thought that remaking the Oscar-winning *All The King's Men* was a good idea also thought that developing an encryption scheme behind closed doors would work gangbusters. And sure enough, within a year, weaknesses were found, published, and widely exploited.

If Wile E. Coyote had gone for his MBA instead of spending all that dough on Acme merchandise, then surely he'd be a high-ranking executive with the Motion Picture Association of America.

Now if you'll excuse me, I have a four-hour train ride tomorrow, and HandBrake has just finished converting the original, *non-hideous* version of *King's Men*.

5

Old Home Video

The Skim

This is a wonderful day, sensation-seekers: I am compelled, nay *com-manded* to work in a reference to *The Prisoner*, the cult Sixties spy series. Secret agent Patrick McGoohan resigns from the Secret Agent Agency and returns to his apartment, which is flooded with knockout gas just as he's leafing through brochures for retirement destinations. He wakes up in The Village, a remote and not entirely unpleasant port-side community. It's where spies are sent if they're in that itchy intersection of "no longer of any immediately relevant use" and "potentially too valuable to simply be allowed to run around free."

My version of The Village is a back corner of a basement closet. It contains (as of the last census): a VCR, an 8mm camcorder, and a LaserDisc player. Each of these items has long-since been replaced by something far more digital and far less improbable. But like McGoohan (referred to in The Village only as "number six"), this obsolete gear must be held indefinitely. So long as there might be even *one* 8mm cassette of a 17-year-old niece's third birthday party; *one* VHS cassette containing the *Far Side Halloween Special* that aired just once; so long as I know that I own *Let It Be* on laserdisc and that The Beatles are so mortified by this movie that they'll never allow it to be released on DVD well, these devices will continue to enjoy a pleasant if marginal existence.

We won't be stuck with this stuff forever, though. I'm steadily converting those home movies, old TV shows, and extended sequences of Paul McCartney acting like a first-class noodge into digital video files and enjoying them on my iPhone just as readily as anything I bought from the iTunes Store last night.

The key: All these old devices have standard analog video and audio connectors. Whether they're fat yellow RCA connectors or the higher-grade SVHS plugs, their outputs can be routed into devices that can transmogrify that content into ginchy, wonderful digital video. Some methods are more direct than others; the right choice depends on how much of this old content you have, and how serious you are about archiving it all into digital video.

Mind you, Chevy Chase's attempt at a late-night talk show will still suck. But at least it'll suck on an awesome smartphone instead of a big, clanky box.

THE BASIC IDEA

At the top of the list is a video "bridge" that takes analog video and audio as input and converts it into digital video on-the-fly during playback. It squirts into your PC or Mac via a USB or Firewire port and desktop software takes it from there. The procedure, in broad strokes:

○ Hook the playback machine (the VHS deck, the old camcorder, the LaserDisc player) to your computer via a hardware interface.

○ Capture the video to your hard drive.

○ Edit the video and export it to an iTunes-study format.

This will cost you anything from (a) nothing to (b) hundreds of dollars, depending

on what you already have lying around the house and how good you'd like the final results to be. The complexity of the process will depend on what software you use.

THE HARDWARE

If you're lucky, you already own a digital camcorder. You already know how well these things work with desktop computers. Unless you got the cheapest model in the store — the one they stock just so the salesman can show off its shortcomings and help sell you the better ones — it has a built-in digital interface that lets you plug the camera right into your desktop. You can then "play" the video straight into your computer.

Many of these cameras also have an analog pass-through feature. If you rummage deep down into the box, you'll find a cable with what appears to be a hyperthyroid headphone plug at one end and connectors at the other that can accept standard analog RCA and SVHS video and audio. If so, huzzah! You can connect the old analog video player into this plug, plug the camcorder into your computer, and use the camcorder as a capture device.

You'll have to operate the old player manually, but the camcorder will perform all the format conversions necessary and any standard video editing app will be able to record the incoming signal to your hard drive.

If you *don't* have a camcorder, you'll have to exercise the ancient martial art of Master-Card-Fu. You can buy simple USB-based analog-to-digital interfaces fairly cheap though.

I really like the hardware made by Pinnacle (pinnaclesys.com). The big box stores are full of cheap and questionable products that promise to transfer your old videos to digital,

but Pinnacle takes this sort of thing very seriously. Its Dazzle line of hardware is simple, easy to use, and affordable.

For Windows users, the Dazzle Video Creator Platinum is a solid, all-in-one solution. It'll capture video and also includes simple editing tools that can export video files directly into iTunes, all for $89. The equivalent Mac offering, the Pinnacle Video Capture, is another all-in-one hardware/software combo, but it'll cost you a full 99 smackers.

Both devices capture high-quality video. The digital conversion is handled by hardware inside the device instead of software running on your desktop, which means that you'll wind up with smooth, clean video with "as good as it's ever going to get" color and detail. Cheaper gizmos rely on the processing power of your PC. At their worst, they're pretty damned bad. Many of them capture video at only half its original resolution and at a jerky 15 frames per second instead of 30.

If you're ambitious about converting and editing old video, you might want to upgrade to something like Canopus's ADVC-55. If you have any experience with technology, you know that when they give a product a name consisting of a random string of numbers and letters, it's going to cost you.

Yeah, this device isn't designed for random consumers who want to convert a few home movies and old TV shows. It's for people who want the highest level of performance (it captures gorgeous video) and greatest convenience (it doesn't require any special software or drivers; you plug it in and any consumer or professional video editing app that knows how to deal with digital video cameras can accept input from the box).

It'll run you about $300. So yeah: The

Pinnacle hardware is starting to look pretty good.

THE SOFTWARE

Onward to editing software. The software you get with the Pinnacle capture hardware (and other gear in its class) tends to be rather basic, like operating a VCR. If you want to do something more ambitious than deleting the commercials from a TV show, you might want to pop for a better app.

If you have a Mac, though, there's really no point in going any farther than the copy of iMovie that came pre-installed on your computer. It's a simple, powerful, and fully mature editing app, and because it has an Apple logo on it you can be sure that when you tell it to export the final video to your iPhone or iPod Touch, the programmers knew what they were doing.

On the PC, there are two good choices. Pinnacle is actually a subsidiary of Avid, the company that makes the professional standard in TV and film editing systems. Its Pinnacle Studio app is dirt-cheap at $49 and can export finished video to iTunes for syncing.

If you intend to do a lot of this sort of thing, you'll probably be happier giving Adobe $99 of your cash for a copy of Adobe Premiere Elements (adobe.com). It's filled with time-saving features and attractive little tweaks that let you turn two hours of boring soccer video into six minutes of terrific highlights, toot sweet.

INDIRECT SOLUTIONS WITH FRINGE BENEFITS

There's a certain satisfaction to buying a box that turns an old VCR into a desktop computer peripheral, more or less. But there are other ways of converting old video into
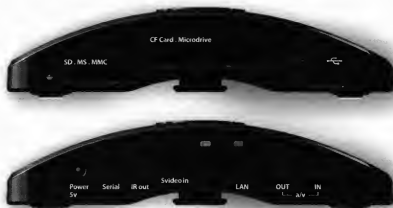
Figure 5-1
Neuros OSD: VCR for the space age

digital, iPhone-studly formats. You might already have one or two of these things in your house. If you need to go out and *buy* a solution, you might prefer to buy something that will have a life outside of converting Aunt Mimsy's third bridal shower.

DVD Recorders

In the last chapter, I wrote about ripping DVDs into digital video. Well, then why bother even hauling your VCR into your home office? Just hook it up to the DVD recorder's inputs, do a direct machine-to-machine copy, burn the disc and then slide it into your computer and rip it as normal.

The sole disadvantage of this method is that the video will be compressed as it's written to the disc. Ordinarily that'd be a drawback — when you're "remastering" content, you want it to arrive as clean as possible — but given the flaws in the original video source you're not likely to lose much.

A DVD recorder is actually my favorite

method of converting video. When I know I have something really important (like video of a newborn kid) I go all-out. But when I have a box of old TV shows — many of which are unlabeled — the recorder is a quick way to move those tapes from the garage into the trash. Put a fifty-cent blank DVD in the machine, push Play on the VCR, and walk away for two hours. It's been archived and I can toss the original, bulky cassette, saving the actual viewing and editing for later.

Neuros OSD

If you *really* want to be Captain Digital — or if you simply resist the concept of wholesale change — the Neuros OSD is an exciting piece of hardware. It's a digital VCR. Really, that explanation is perfect. You plug it into the stack of video gear under your TV. Any time you're watching something and you think "Ooo, I'd like to record that for my iPhone," you just pick up the Neuros

remote and press record.

The video is automatically converted into a digital video file and stored on any storage device you've plugged into the Neuros's USB port, or any memory card you've popped into one of its exhaustive menagerie of card slots. When you plug the hard drive or thumb drive or memory card into your computer, it's contains folders of standard MP4 files, which you can import into iTunes or edit using desktop video software.

Visit neurostechnology.com for more info. It costs $170 but, man alive, it's a frightfully compelling video-to-digital solution that's right where you want it. Press a button, you've got MP4.

What's the best thing about converting old videos? It removes irreplaceable family memories from decrepit media and puts them in a form where they can easily and flawlessly be duplicated and shared.

The second-best thing is that there's a great deal of fantastic creative work that simply dies because there's no way it'll ever be released on DVD or even re-aired. Either there's no financial incentive, or the rights are tangled up in a huge mess of companies that got bought by other companies that went bust, or it contains music that would be prohibitively expensive to license for home-video distribution.

My usual example is a fantastic production of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, starring the Flying Karamazov Brothers and two dozen other jugglers, ropewalkers, and fellow New Vaudevillians. It was a successful stage show and PBS aired a performance on *Live From Lincoln Center*. It aired live. PBS stations were allowed to rebroadcast it once within the week and then that's it. Gone. Utterly brilliant, but after the performers went their separate ways after the final performance, the show might as well never have happened in the first place.

But! Folks had taped it when it aired more than 25 years ago. I got a great tape duped from the collection of one of the original performers. After less than an afternoon, I had digital video on my iPhone and my desktop. I watch and enjoy it all over again every few months.

I was too young to appreciate the heyday of the telethon, but I still had to reflect that in the Seventies you'd tune into the first couple of hours of this show and you'd see Sinatra singing a duet with Ella Fitzgerald, followed by Sammy Davis Jr. backed by the Count Basie Orchestra.

Someone has that show on tape. If you do, let me know because I have a Neuros OSD and a desperate need to be entertained.

6

Glorious Television

The Skim

I like the iTunes Store, I *use* the iTunes Store, and I want to *support* the iTunes Store. Those plucky Apple kids are showing a lot of spunk with their little garage startup, and if this is what they want to do after college instead of going on to law school like they've always said they wanted to, well, it breaks their poor mother's heart but they always said that they wanted to raise kids with enough confidence and self-reliance to choose their own paths in life.

But all too often, folks count on the iTunes Store as their sole means of acquiring content. It's like fast food. It's quick, it's easy, and it's always available. But it's always more money than you need to spend, and it only offers a limited menu.

I'm pretty surprised, for instance, that folks pay $30 to $50 for season passes to their favorite shows. If you're willing to be a season behind at all times, that's more than the cost of that same season on DVD, only you don't get the higher video quality or the huge quantity of extras.

And if you *don't* want to wait, then you can buy simple TV tuner hardware that plugs into a USB port. A USB TV tuner is affordable. It's a tiny and simple piece of hardware usually no larger than a USB thumb drive. Whether over the air or via clear-QAM cable programming, a TV tuner records pure digital signals that are every bit as good as anything you'd get from the iTunes Store and the shows you record

on a PC, there's let's see …

(Ihnatko shoves the edge of his desk and sends self and his chair to the other side of the office; retrieves a big plastic tub full of hardware; crab-walks chair back to desk)

…at least nine. Two of 'em are worthy of a shout-out and a recommendation:

Hauppage WinTV

I like Hauppage's gear (hauppage.com) because you can select from such a wide variety of consistently high-quality hardware. You can buy a dirt-cheap $55 card that installs inside your desktop PC, a little $80 USB box, a just-as-cheap thing the size of a USB thumb drive that you can easily take with you when you travel and even big $200 cards that can record digital satellite TV and feature dual tuners so that it can record more than one show at a time.

They all include Hauppage's WinTV tuner/PVR (personal video recorder, if you're not into yet another acronym) software, which is a treat to use. WinTV is available in both conventional analog and bleeding-edge digital TV editions. Unfortunately, the WinTV software doesn't support iTunes directly. But the company offers Wing, a $25 add-on app that can record TV shows directly to your iPhone or iPod Touch by simply clicking a checkbox (see Figure 6-1).

Pinnacle PCTV

Pinnacle's TV tuner line (available in a wide range of USB and PC card flavors; pinnaclesys.com) isn't as ambitious as Hauppage's. But it has a clear goal of being as easy to set up and use as a TV set itself. And given that *Clerks: The Animated Series* got cancelled two episodes in and yet *Family Guy* continues to be a huge hit, you *know* that this

can be automatically added to your iTunes library and synced to your iPhone automatically, shortly after the show's end-credits have been squished off the side of the screen.

If you were going to buy two or three Season Passes, you've more than covered the cost of the hardware and software, and *Late Show with David Letterman* isn't coming to the iTunes Store anytime soon.

So it's a choice of either the infinite possibilities of cooking your own TV content or spending more money and having a limited range of options. It's a no-brainer.

TV TO PC TO IPHONE

On the Mac, there's really only one choice for TV-recording hardware and software. But

Figure 6-1
Recording WinTV shows to your iPhone on a Wing.

---

translates into a goal to be functional even if the average TV viewer is as dumb as a jar of asphalt. The other great advantage (from my perspective) is that Pinnacle is made by a company with a big line of video software and converters in their catalogue.

As with the Hauppage tuners, iPhone support isn't aggressive; you just get a rudimentary converter. But Pinnacle makes a whole line of video editor and converter apps, so with a minor outlay of cash you can easily pick up a copy of their companion Pinnacle Studio software and zap the commercials and any musical numbers from Tony Danza.

You know what? I'm going to end the list right there. Go with Hauppage for overall

quality, but go with Pinnacle hardware if you want a recording and editing solution.

Converting Shows from Your Media Center PC

I can tell just by the way you're holding this book that you're a person of wealth and taste. It's possible that you already *own* a machine that records TV shows digitally.

If you have a Windows Media Center PC, or are recording television using the Media Center software built-into Windows Vista, there's a fab little app that can take its programming, convert them to .mp4 files, and add them to your iTunes library: Proxure's MyTV to Go utility ($30, mytvtogo.com).

Figure 6-2
Adding iPod support to Windows Media Center Edition with MyTV to Go

Figure 6-3
TV to iPhone PDQ with EyeTV

Figure 6-2 shows the app in action. After a few moments of pointing and clicking, the shows you've recorded will be transcoded into iPhone– and iPod Touch–studly formats and squirted into your iTunes library.

TV TO MAC TO IPHONE

In the grand tradition that's been kept alive by everyone who's ever gotten a tattoo on an impulse, I'm going to pretend that something bad is actually exactly the *perfect thing*. Watch me:

"Hey, isn't it terrific that there's pretty much only *one* solution for recording TV on a Mac? Those poor bastards with PCs have to make a decision after looking at almost a *dozen* different options!"

Okay, well, it's not like there's *really* only one piece of tuner hardware and PVR software available. For the Mac there are as many as … um … okay, two.

But the only one I'll tell you about is the EyeTV from Elgato. The hardware and software are head-and-shoulders above anything else. They have a whole line of external boxes

that work on nearly all Macs, including conventional and HDTV options (see Figure 6-3).

Check out products and prices at elgato.com. As with the Hauppage line, they range from cheap doo-dads that cost $80 to expensive boxes that hope to be the heart of your HD home theater system

As a Mac-only product, the EyeTV software is aggressive in its support for iPhones and iPods. Any recorded show can be transcoded to the correct specs and added to your iTunes library with just one click.

Yes indeed: It's the big button that looks like an iPod and says "iPod."

As with almost any transcoding process, it'll take a while before the file's finished (even on an Intel-based Mac, it can take two times the running length of the show). But if you've set EyeTV to record your favorite shows, you can have the app convert the programs to iPod the moment recording is finished. Just select the iPod option from the Export To pop-up menu in either the show's schedule detail view (see Figure 6-4), or in the schedule list itself.

With the iPhone export option enabled, by the time you wake up in the morning all the night's recordings will be waiting for you in your library and ready to sync to your iPhone or your iPod Touch. Just don't watch

them while you drive. It's very rude to the person you're talking to on the phone in your other hand.

THE DVD METHOD

I have sort of a genetic attraction toward the "Record TV on a computer, have the computer transcode the show to an iPhone-compatible format" solution. When the computer handles everything from start to finish, you feel as secure and at peace as you do when you see the lady at Dunkin Donuts box your half-dozen with a set of tongs.

But if you're going to go around buying hardware, you probably ought to consider the option of just buying a standalone DVD recorder. It can make a timed recording the output of your cable box just like a VCR, and after you've burned the disc you can pop it into your PC or Mac and use any DVD-ripper software to convert the shows therein to video files. Read all about that in Chapter 4.

And because that DVD isn't copy-protected, you won't even need any of the extra decoding software that the PC apps usually require. It's more complicated than recording shows directly onto your hard drive, but maybe you *wanted* to buy a DVD recorder anyway. It's up to you, all right? I'm just a man, here.

About 24 hours after I write this, I'll be on a four-hour Amtrak ride from Boston to New York City. So naturally it's very, very important that I check my EyeTV schedules and make sure that it's about to record and transcode about six hours' worth of programming.

Which is in itself a double-edged thing. I was upfront with you about the nature of this book: If there's even 100K of unused space on your iPhone or iPod Touch, then you just aren't trying hard enough. But man
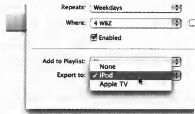
Figure 6-4
iPod conversion: the zero-click method

alive, once you start using your desktop computer as a DVR, your goal stops being "I want to fill this 16-gigabyte device to full capacity" and starts being "Er you know, I now have less than 20 megabytes of storage on an internal hard drive that had about 200 gigs free last month, before I hooked up the TV tuner box."

As I write this, the lack of free space has made my Mac slow and sluggish. I tell it "You know what you should do? You should open Photoshop and help me edit these 50 photos I took at the MIT Flea Market last weekend." The computer takes a few moments to acknowledge me and even then, it clearly would just like to remain inert.

So in the end, a TV tuner box adds an extra level of sophistication to the home-video experience. It's been said that the purpose of a TiVo or any other PVR is to monitor hundreds of hours of TV programming so you don't have to. With the advent of a little USB peripheral, now your PC or Mac can duplicate the *physical* effects of so much TV watching as well.
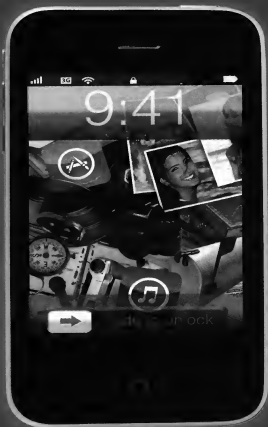
7

Radio

The Skim

The RadioShark ▸ Importing Recorded Audio into iTunes ▸
Importing Shows into iTunes

For many people, an AM/FM radio is an object that only gets pressed into service when (a) there's a baseball or hockey game on or (b) you're reminded that you're not at the tippy-top of that list of Most Smartest Land Mammals. There are meerkats out there who have absolutely no problem remembering to pack an iPhone car adapter for that four-hour drive to Flagstaff.

But don't scoff at radio. It's only at those long, lonely forsaken moments that you come to appreciate the value of radio. Well, yeah, corporate stations I can take or leave (and that first option doesn't count). But local radio is wonderful. I may pride myself on being thoroughly modern but there's something fundamental about interactive community-based call-in shows that a message board will never duplicate.

Besides, radio is a swell source of free content for your iPhone or iPod Touch. It's hard to consider switching on a $12 radio to be Sticking It To The Man. But I bet the fact that you're listening to copyrighted music without paying for it has *got* to have the Recording Industry Association of America upset for *some* bloody reason.

And isn't that enough reason to buy the hardware you need to record radio shows and automatically load them up on your iPhone?

THE RADIOSHARK

There are a bunch of PC and Mac radio receivers on the market, but I believe that all discussion of What To Buy begins and ends with the $49 RadioShark 2 by Griffin Technology (griffintech.com). My argument, which I promise you, is quite ironclad:

- It's an external USB device, and installs as easily as a mouse whether you're using a desktop or a notebook.
- It lives up to its marketing tagline as "TiVo for radio." The software makes it dead-simple to schedule regular recordings, and save those programs as files that can slurp straight into iTunes without any further ado.
- It's both PC– and Mac-compatible, which means you can move it from system to system, cackling with glee.

And that's all very, very true. But the trump card, the feature that closed down the competition before it ever really started is

Figure 7-1
The RadioShark: instant awesome

this: It looks like a jet-black shark fin, and is studded with colored lights (see Figure 7-1).

Game, set, and match. There is no piece of office equipment that cannot be immeasurably improved by having a light-up electronic shark fin placed atop it or on a nearby shelf. I mean, come *on*.

To be honest, I might have recommended it even if it didn't actually do anything. Conveniently, it works exactly as advertised. Installation takes less than five minutes and leaves you with a radio tuner window on your desktop (see Figure 7-2).

You spin the dial (or just use the Seek button for auto-tuning), you enjoy the sounds as they float through the air, and if you like what you're hearing, punch the Record button.

Simple, but not simple enough: I want to make every episode of Boston's local radio

> **TIP**
>
> It's actually possible to have the best of both worlds these days. Many radio stations are thoroughly modern Millies and they either stream their programming live over the Internet or they go so far as to even package their most popular shows as podcasts. Chapters 13 and 14 teach you what you need to know about finding this online programming and capturing it to your hard drive without buying any actual hardware.

newscast or just next Thursday's Red Sox game as easy to load into our iTunes library as a podcast. RadioShark has a full compliment of scheduled-recording features (see Figure 7-3).

You can schedule an event days or even months in advance, and if it's a regular show you can specify that it's a repeating show that should be recorded every Sunday, or every weekday, or on whatever schedule you specify. And there's no limit to how many items you can add to the schedule.

As much as I like the RadioShark, I *should* point out that most radio stations are all too aware that you kids today are into flared trousers, Beatles haircuts, and digital music players, and offer alternative delivery methods. So before you go the RadioShark route, Google the call letters of your local stations and see what's available via their Web sites.

Oftentimes, their most popular shows are posted as podcasts shortly after transmission. Search through the iTunes Store for the call letters. Or, maybe they simulcast all their programming via streaming audio. In Chapter 13, you can read about software that lets you schedule and automatically capture these feeds to audio files. Either way, you might get a cleaner reception through a download than from over the air.

The RadioShark isn't expensive, but it costs more than a copy of *People* magazine so it's not like it's dirt-cheap. Still, a pal of mine bought one to record one thing and one thing only: the morning traffic report, which is never on precisely when she wants to hear it. No kidding. One five-minute recording that she plays while the car's warming up saves her so much annoyance and time that she says she would have paid double what Griffin was asking for the device.
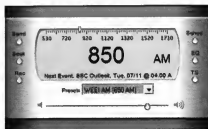
Figure 7-2
The main tuner window (in Windows)

As for a custom little script that automatically creates a brand-new iTunes playlist of podcasts and music, with the traffic report always inserted into the Number 1 position, she was more than happy to let me write for free. Yes, it still stings.

IMPORTING RECORDED AUDIO INTO ITUNES

Whether you punch Record manually or allow RadioShark to record shows for you automatically, the app will stash the recording inside your default music folder. That's My Music if you're using Windows, Music if you're on a Mac.

Windows

By default, the Windows edition chooses Windows Media as the audio format, with conservative settings that result in tight, compact files. You can downgrade the quality (and get smaller files) by selecting a lower bit rate in the Format pop-up menu when you schedule the recording.

To use these files in iTunes, just drag them into your iTunes library window. iTunes will automatically convert them to AAC.

Macintosh

RadioShark's Mac app has a little bonus
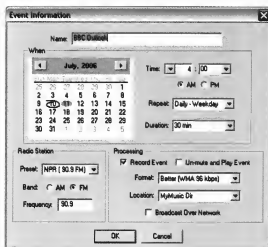
Figure 7-3
Setting up a scheduled recording (in Windows)
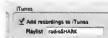
Figure 7-4
Putting the morning news onto your iPod automagically — on the Mac, anyhow

feature: by clicking the Add Recordings to iTunes checkbox in the app's Record & Playback preferences, RadioShark will automatically send the recordings it creates straight into your iTunes Library and right into the playlist you specify (see Figure 7-4). By telling iTunes to keep this playlist synced to your iPhone, your device will always contain the local morning news and traffic when you plug it into your car stereo and begin that brutal, soul-wrenching commute morning after morning.

Otherwise, just locate the files inside your Music folder and drag 'em into your iTunes Library window.

There are times when I'm convinced that radio is doomed to die a deathly death. But there are also times when I wonder if it's commercial music whose days are numbered. I have iPhones and iPods and other digital music players and there are a million ways to cause hours and hours of free programming to arrive each and every day and fill their storage space. And services like Pandora and Last.fm make buying music seem even quainter. Oh, just wait until you get to Chapter 11, when I talk about new services and software that fully exploits the iPhone 3G's high-speed Internet connection, and hooks you up to every piece of music ever published, streamed live to your phone based solely on a (usually correct) hunch that you'll like it.

To be honest, iTunes already downloads more podcasts every day than I can possibly play. With the addition of the RadioShark, which will grab hours and hours' worth of music and copyrighted sports broadcasts well, my interest in purchasing the new American Idol holiday ballads CD continues to decline. And it isn't like I was all that interested in the first place.

8

Comics

The Skim

Turning Comic Books into Photo Albums ◉ Finding Comics Online ◉
Unmentionables ◉ Transmogrifying a Comic ◉ Comic Strips ◉
Comics and Comic Strip Reader Apps

An iPhone that doesn't read comic strips and comic books is like that
7-foot 3-inch sophomore in high school who's never considered
playing basketball. I mean, come on. Yes, you have the right to make
your own decisions in life but how did you last this long without *some-
body* tapping you on the shoulder (more likely: lower back) and saying,
"You know what sort of activity would be *perfect* for you?"

And with this chapter, I'm poking Apple in the lower campus and
telling it that the iPhone and the iPod Touch would be — are — *perfect*
devices for reading comic strips and comic books. These kinds of media
sort of defy translation to mobile devices. Some publishers have taken a
stab at it, but usually by chopping up the panels of the comic into bite-
sized full screens. Which sort of neuters the whole experience; so much
of the storytelling pace of a comic is owed to the velocity of your eyes as
they trace a path from the top of the page to the bottom, following the
course dictated by the artwork.

As it turns out, the iPhone is practically tailor-made for comics. It has
a gorgeous, high-resolution color display. It has a touch interface and zip-
ping from page to page and panel to panel is natural and intuitive. And it
has a fast connection to the Internet, so it can grab all the morning's strips
in a trice and even manage digitally bulky manga with nary a shrug.

Figure 8-1
Oh, Mary Worth, *when* will you learn to shut your piehole and stop meddling?

In other devices, taking your eyeballs on a walk through a standard comic means lots of awkward and imprecise clicking and scrolling. With the iPhone, you just nudge the page with your thumb until the next panel is in view (see Figure 8-1). It's fab.

TURNING COMIC BOOKS INTO PHOTO ALBUMS

The comix industry is still figuring out how to deal with the digital world. Small, independent publishers with little to lose have started to package their comics inside self-contained little viewer apps and make them available for purchase on the App Store's Books page. DC and Marvel, however, have yet to really figure out how to separate an iPhone owner and his or her money.

(Admittedly, more likely "his.")

So as a result, if you head for official company Web sites you're likely to see a handful of promotional comics available for online reading. If you're *extremely* lucky, these comics aren't locked into iPhone-incompatible Flash-based Web pages, and you can download them as PDF files, which you can slap on your iPhone and read without any special tricks or conversions (check out Chapter 19 for the straight dope).

But these companies just aren't learning from history. The music industry didn't get on the digital music bus and as a result, impatient consumers jumped behind the wheel and drove away in it, leaving publishers with no control whatsoever. And the same thing seems to have happened with digital comics.

The community of Internet geeks and the community of comic-book geeks — yes, apparently there's a certain amount of overlap — have come up with a very simple digital comic book format called a Comic Book Archive (CBA) or Comic Book Reader (CBR) file and it's become the most popular format for online comix repositories.

You *could* go out and buy a CBR reader for your iPhone. But the format is so simple, and the iPhone's navigation tools are so rich, that a standalone reader isn't terribly necessary. I'm perfectly happy converting the contents of the file to a series of JPEGs and syncing it to the iPhone simply as a photo album. When you extract the images from the CBR file, they're already numbered in sequence so the pages will land on your device already in their proper order.

And extracting the images from the file is dead simple. They're compressed together using standard file archive formats.

There are two flavors of Comic Book Archive files:

◘ Files that end in .cbz are archived in

ZIP format.

○ Files that end in .cbr are in TAR format.

To load these comics on an iPhone or a Touch, you just need to extract the JPEGs. You can then sync the images to the device just like any other pictures.

FINDING COMICS ONLINE

Turning a comic into a Comic Book Archive file is no more complicated than ripping a CD or a DVD. In fact, the term "ripping" was actually coined by the process for converting comics to digital files. Your computer's optical drive is the perfect size for optical disks but you can't get a comic book in there unless you physically rip the pages out, fold them once or twice, and jam 'em in there.

Which is a major hassle but once you've managed to pound the door shut again, the software does all the work.

I'm lying, of course.

Until the big publishers decide to get into the game, there are only a couple of really ""big repositories of digital comics: http://goldenagecomics.co.uk hosts archive files of hundreds of comics that have fallen out of copyright and are now in the public domain.

The *smaller* publishers have gotten behind a commercial site called Pullbox Online (pullboxonline.com). It ain't *exactly* an "iTunes Store for Comic Books" but it does have dozens of CBR and PDF-format editions of commercial titles, and you can buy 'em for as little as a quarter (see Figure 8-2).

And although there's no shortage of archive files available elsewhere, they're likely to be on the Web sites of individual artists and creators and can't be smoke out with a conventional Google search.

Fortunately, there are plenty of social bookmarking services that can help you out. If someone was traipsing through the Web like Hansel or Gretel and came across a free comic they liked, they might have posted the link to http://delicious.com or digg.com.

A search for "cbr comic –news –resources"

TIP

You can't just type "free cbr comics" into Google and get racks and racks of free comics. Way too many hits.

But you *can* use some of Google's power tools to broadly say, "Please search for .CBR files located on public Web servers." Take a deep breath and type this search string into Google's search box:

http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=–inurl%3Ahtm+–inurl%3Ahtml+intitle%3A%22index+of%22+%22Last+modified%22+comics+cbr&btnG=Google+Search

Put it all on one line. You'll get back a lonnnng list of links to individual files with no descriptions, but in addition to the links you'll get some clues to individual sites that host

small collections of comics. Replace "comic" with a more specific search term (like "horror") if you like.

Kudos to tech-recipes.com, which is full of little tidbits like this. I was about to build this string myself but hey, cool, they had it all ready to go.

Family Guy 03: Books Don't Taste Very Good

Location: >Family Guy

Product Information
Writer: Matt Fleckenstein (Family Guy TV show writer)
Artists: Benjamin Phillips

Stewie's shared his expansive knowledge, and then Peter took his turn. Now, the time has come to hear words of wisdom from... Chris?! Huh? "Wisdom?" Uhm... okay... More fun from the twisted world of The Family Guy writer Matt Fleckenstein!

Check out a sample of the contents in PDF format!

44 pages!

Price: $1.99

- Tell a Friend

Product Options:
File Type [.PDF ⬦]
Add to Basket
Product Code: FOXFGD0003

Figure 8-2
Pullbox Online: It ain't the iTunes Store, but y'all can get comics from it.

(those last two terms will remove many, many links to the popular Comic Book Resources comic blog) and some careful scrolling will usually unearth a few gems.

Most digital comics seem to be CBR files, but to search for the other kind just swap CBR for CBZ in the search strings. They'll turn up links to both individual books and whole collections.

Mind you, you'll *still* have to wade through plenty of false hits. It certainly doesn't help that there's an excellent, but for our immediate purposes highly annoying, comics news-and-reviews site called Comic Book Resources (or CBR), but you'll be on your way.

UNMENTIONABLES

By far, the *greatest* number of digital comics are copyrighted material illegally being down-

register) Search for: _____ Go

ULLBOX

ONLINE

Shop by Category

- Homepage
- Devil's Due Publishing
- Jim Mahfood
- Tim Seeley - Loaded Bible
- Family Guy
- IDW Publishing
- Giftcards
- R.A. Salvatore's Demon Wars
- Norton & Baron's the "Night Club"
- Hyperwerks
- Nautilus Comics
- XOMBIE
- Chucky
- DRAFTED
- Sale Items

Shopping Basket

Your basket is empty.

| Items in cart: | 0 |
| Total: | $0.00 |

View Basket

loaded via BitTorrent without their publishers' consent. When I read a statistic that claimed that more than 80 percent of the thousands of comics published since 1962 are available through file-sharing services, it seemed ridiculous. Then I looked and — gorblimey! — any comic you can name is up there, nicely indexed and ready to go.

This is a very itchy situation.

It is clearly — *clearly* — wrong to get comics this way when the books are in print, or available from any bookstore or comic shop

as part of a reprint book. There is absolutely no defense whatsoever for downloading last week's issue of *Birds of Prey* (DC Comics; good stuff) when you can obtain one legally from a nearby store for half the price of a cup of Starbucks. And *The Watchmen* is a true classic and you really *should* read it. Luckily, the collected paperback is never, ever *ever* going out of print and is available from any mainstream bookstore.

My position softens a bit when it comes to books like *West Coast Avengers*. It was published by Marvel back in the Eighties and featured dynamic, meat-and-potatoes style action and characterization written by Steve Englehart, one of the best writers in the biz.

But then it was twenty years ago. It doesn't feature any Marvel "superstar" characters, and its 100 issues of story really didn't figure into any modern Marvel events (well, *House of M*, but that recent series brutally sucked, so it doesn't count), so there's zero chance of it ever being collected and reprinted.

As a writer myself, I just have this thing about wonderful work that's just allowed to wither and die like that. On *this* basis, in the face of Marvel's apparent complete lack of desire for Marvel to gain any revenue from this property and the benefits of this material finding some sort of audience, I'm willing to rule that downloading this title from a Bit-Torrent site doesn't violate the Hippocratic Oath ("First, do no harm"). Put a few drinks in me (oh, bless your heart. Beefeater gin and tonic, not too heavy on the gin, please. And two limes) and I might even tell you that there's an actual moral imperative to helping this material endure.

In fact, in *my* case I can even unfold a

Figure 8-3
Extracting comics with 7-Zip

beach chair here on the Moral High Ground. I bought each and every one of those books as individual comics, and I still own 'em all. So Marvel already *has* my money.

I should warn you that BitTorrent is a grotesquely slow, difficult, and unreliable way of getting *anything*. For this and many other reasons I won't discuss how to download comics this way. But if you plug a few red-flag words into Google I'm sure you'll find the info.

TRANSMOGRIFYING A COMIC

Once you've downloaded a CBR or CBZ file, you just have to unpack the individual JPEGs. TAR and ZIP are both hugely popular formats. There are plenty of utilities that can deal with 'em. Whether you have a PC or a Mac, you can handle the job by downloading just one free utility.

Either way, your first step is to make sure the utility can open the file. They're standard archive files that can be opened by any utility that can handle RAR or ZIP files.

In both Windows Explorer and the Mac Finder, you rename a file by simply clicking its name once to select it, and then clicking it again to edit it.

Select the three-letter filename extension. If it was originally .cbr, change it to .rar. If it was .cbz, make it .zip. Now you're ready to unpack the file.

The Windows Side

All you need is a free utility called 7-Zip. You can download it from http://sourceforge.

net/projects/sevenzip/. It works with both CBR and ZIP files. All you need to do is:

1. Use the file browser to navigate to the comic book archive you downloaded.

2. Open it by either double-clicking or pressing Enter. The contents will appear as a folder (see Figure 8-3).

3. Click the Extract button. A window will open that allows you to choose a location for the extracted folder. By default, it points to the same directory as the archive, but you can navigate elsewhere by clicking the "…" button.

4. Click OK.

7-Zip will spit out a folder of JPEGs, which you can then sync to your iPhone just as you would any other pile of pictures. Because the files are numbered sequentially, they'll stay in their proper order so long as you don't manually slide them around in a photo album or something like that. Turn to Chapter 20 for complete instructions on syncing photos to your iPhone or iPod Touch.

The Macintosh Side

The Mac Finder has a built-in extractor for ZIP files. To unpack the archive, just double-click on the file. It'll soon be joined by a folder with the same name as the archive.

For RAR files, head on over to stuffit.com/mac and download a free copy of StuffIt Expander. Expander is what's known as a "helper" application. It doesn't really have a user interface of its own. Like extracting a ZIP file, when you double-click the file, Expander discreetly launches, unpacks the archive into a folder next to the original archive file, and then disappears again.

To get it going, you just need to tell the Finder that it ought to hand off all .RAR files

to Expander from now on. You do this via the file's contextual menu.

1. Right-click on the .RAR file (or hold down the Control key and click, if you only have a one-button mouse). A contextual menu should open (see Figure 8-4).

2. Choose Open With ▶ Other. Normally, the Finder would populate that list with apps that know what to do with this kind of file. Alas, it has no clue, so it's up to you. A standard file picker appears.

3. Navigate to the Application folder (or wherever you installed the app) and select StuffIt Expander.

Now you can unpack this archive (and all others like it) simply by double-clicking on it.

I ought to point out that with this particular kind of file, it isn't even necessary to change the filename extension to .rar. If you leave the name as-is and associate it with Expander, the Finder will simply hand the file off to Expander without any further ado.

Ditto for CBZ files, though in this case you'd need to associate that type with Expander as well.

You now have a folder of JPEGs, sorted in their proper page order, which you can now sync to your iPhone or iPod Touch in the

Figure 8-4
Teaching the Finder to unpack RARs with StuffIt Expander

simple and glorious manner so eloquently demarcated in yonder Chapter 20.

COMIC STRIPS

This *is* a chapter about comics, so I ought to also talk about using your iPhone or Touch to read comic strips online. There really isn't much of a trick to it. There's no special app or resource and it's no more complicated than knowing about a few newspapers with *wonderful* Web sites that put dozens of strips on one convenient page:

○ *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (seattlepi. com). Tops for iPhone users. Not only do they have dozens of the best strips (*Dilbert, Mutts, Pearls Before Swine*) but every individual strip contains a pop-up menu that lists all the *rest* of the strips. So yes, you *do* have to peer closely at the screen to tap on your first, but from then on, it's like you're using an app that was designed for maximum convenience (see Figure 8-5).

○ *The Houston Chronicle* (chron.com). It's not quite as convenient as the *Seattle P-I*, but you can choose from two huge columns of comics. Any strips that are missing from the other site are probably right here.

○ Yahoo News (http://news.yahoo.com/comics). I'll include this one just for the sake of completeness. Every online comics page subscribes to a different collection of strips and if this is the only place you can find all of your six "must-read" strips together on one page, well, there y'go. One neat thing about Yahoo!: The other sites don't post the day's strip until midnight Pacific Coast time. Yahoo! posts them at midnight Eastern time. So it's a chance to get an advance peek at
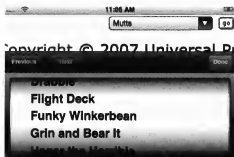

Figure 8-5
Scrolling through the funny pages on the *Seattle P-I*'s site

Doonesbury and maybe win a couple of bar bets.

○ GoComics.com (gocomics.com). A relative newcomer. GoComics isn't associated with any specific newspaper or news service, so it's sort of short-circuiting the traditional model. But it's a good spot to pick up strips that haven't attracted a national following yet.

COMICS AND COMIC STRIP READER APPS

We're finally starting to capitalize on the potential of the iPhone as a comic reader. Third-party apps are available that break comics free from the iPhone's Web browser and photo viewer and take those first steps toward building a custom-made experience.

iEnvision: The Strip Reader That Isn't

I've had iEnvision for more than a month now and I swear I still skate right on past it in my list of iPhone apps. Open Door Networks' app isn't specifically for comic strips: it's a general utility for pulling images from the Web and playing them in slideshows.

And the app has two whole pages of comic strip collections (see Figure 8-6).

Tap on one of these prefab collections, and the day's strips will start paging through your iPhone one at a time (see Figure 8-7).

Open Door also has a cheaper version of iEnvision that's *just* for comic strips: they call it Comic Envi. Personally, I think it's worth the few extra dollars for the full app. For one, the "real" app lets you build your own custom comics collections. For another, you can use it to access sites like NASA's Astronomy Picture of the Day and hundreds of other visual delights.

Clickwheel:
A Peek at the Future of Comics

Clickwheel.net is one of those online comix publishers I told you about earlier. You can visit the site and download either free or purchased content in PDF or CBR format.

But Clickwheel is the first comix company to take advantage of the great opportunity presented by the iPhone. On the Web, Clickwheel is just one independent publisher among many. But by creating a simple, free application for accessing and playing Clickwheel content, the company instantly became the most important and relevant comix source for the iPhone.

As of this writing, they're the *only* comix publisher that makes it
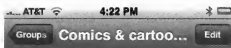
Figure 8-6
iEnvision gives you one-click iPhone access to the best strips on the Net.

Figure 8-7
Today's bit of funny

Figure 8-8
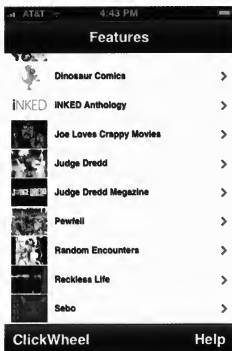The Clickwheel galaxy of comics

if comix companies don't embrace this great potential, then they are clearly a culture in chaos incapable of self-governing, and should be annexed. By whom, I don't know.

When you first picked up this book and looked at my photo on the back, you probably thought "Good God now *here's* the sort of grown man who still reads comic books."

You know, prejudice, bigotry, and snap judgments are ugly, useless things that jam a potato in the tailpipe of the engines of the progress of Society.

(And there's nothing wrong with reading comic books in your thirties. *Nothing wrong.* Shut up!!!)

Well, gee, who's the bigger loser? The loser, or the loser who just spent a half an hour *reading* about what the loser does? Huh?

Let's just put this whole incident behind us and move on. Friends?

Okay, well, I *still* have your money. So there.

easy for an iPhone user to view their content.

Check out Figure 8-8 to peep the Click-wheel experience.

You can purchase content online, but most of the titles available via the iPhone app are free. Clickwheel promises that they'll soon be publishing an edition that can display CBR comic files from any source, and good luck to them on that.

I'm including the app here chiefly because I'm certain that one day, Marvel Comics will have a comic reader and DC and Dark Horse and every other publisher, too. Rule One of marketing is to make it dead-simple for people to see your product; purchasing content should be even deader and simpler. And

PART III

The Internet

9

News, Blogs, and Bookmarks

The Skim

Digg ⊛ News Apps ⊛ Blogs and Newsreaders ⊛
Bookmarks ⊛ Delicious

If the only thing the iPhone did for you was deliver online information, it'd still be cheap at double the price.

Well, it'd still be worth paying full retail.

Oh, I've forgotten about the two-year cell phone contract. Okay: It would definitely be worth paying full retail for the *iPod Touch* if all it did was deliver online information.

The secret is the power and ambition of the Safari browser. It's absolutely tops in mobile. In fact, you can think of it as Just Another Web Browser; it's that sophisticated, truly. But you'd be missing a number of neat tricks and conveniences if you lock yourself in to the standard mode of bookmarking sites and visiting them. The shortest distance between your eyeballs and the information you want to be reading is usually along the line of a brilliant online service or a dedicated iPhone application.

The Firehose Effect is a big problem with the Internet in general, but it's an operatic-scale lament when you just want the convenience and browsability of a simple 50-cent newspaper. There's just way too much data out there, scattered across way too many resources.

So when you want to fill 20 minutes of waiting time at your dentist's

Figure 9-1
Digg.com: The world reads the Web so you don't have to.

Figure 9-2
Digg lets you try before you buy.

office with a quick look at whether there's enough of a future ahead to think about getting your teeth whitened, you don't reach for the firehose. You let others do the filtering and aggregating for you.

DIGG

Digg.com is like a big Internet funnel. Folks all across the Internet reach for a browser button marked Digg This! whenever they come across a page or an article that's so interesting that it deserves wider attention. Their recommendation winds up at Digg.com and if hundreds or even thousands of users make the same choice, it lands on Digg's top pages.

Digg is a great resource for instant, fast-moving information. And it has a wonderful iPhone interface; just point Safari to http://m.digg.com.

Figure 9-1 shows the freshest Web pages and stories posted to Digg by its huge international community of users. It's really a powerful concept. Digg is free for everybody. If in your usual online travels you come across a Web page that you like, you can submit it to Digg. Ultimately, if lots of people recommend this page and the frequency with which it's been recommended is accelerating, algorithms at Digg flag it as an item of particular interest and it lands on Digg's directory of new and wonderful links, which is updated nearly in real-time.

Digg's top page is general-interest items. But if you just want to know what's going on in the world of sports, world news, entertainment, the environment, just about anything, you just tap the Topics button and select a category from a list of about four dozen subcategories.

If one of these headlines leaps out at you, give it a tap and you'll be taken to a page that describes the content (see Figure 9-2). Hmm. It seems that this so-called "Google phone," a.k.a. Android, fascinates about 441 people — the fools. I beg you, dear readers: Do not mock them. Pity them. They shall come around in due time. Mankind everywhere struggles towards the light, not away from it.

Should you want to understand their misguided example, tapping the headline in Figure 9-2 takes you to the actual article on the actual Web page.

I like Digg because it casts a wide net. The top page will link to a PDF file of a David Hasselhoff paper doll. But the next item in the listing will be a *Wall Street Journal* story about furious lobbying to overturn a key piece of legislation that keeps the whole mortgage industry afloat. Then a YouTube of some kid trying to play "Radar Love" on a cheap guitar using only his feet, a revealing interview with a presidential candidate's chief of staff …

Digg is the perfect answer to the question "What are people interested in and talking about right now?" In olden days, you'd hear people scurrying around and you'd rush to switch on the TV to find out what's going on. Now, you turn to Digg.

Google News

If thousands of human hearts beat at the core of Digg's news page, Google News's
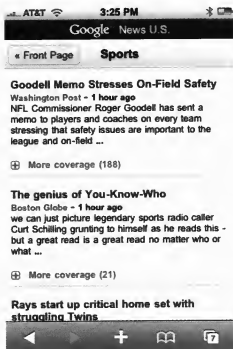

Figure 9-3
Google News assembles one massive newspaper from every online edition on the planet.

choices are cold and calculating, a pure and perfect killing machine of targeted information. Remorseless; it has no soul, so … so…

Er, what I mean is that Google's servers simply make a whole bunch of calculations about what news items are receiving the most coverage and attention. And it has a purty iPhone interface too: http://news.google.com.

Figure 9-3 tells the story. You turn to this interactive resource when you want to have a conventional newsprint experience. The stories that the News Terminator T-10000 selects for these pages are from some of the most trusted sources in journalism.

NEWS APPS

Digg and Google News look great, but they're Web sites you connect to via the Safari browser. Many news organizations and news-aggregating services have chosen to use the iPhone as a way of delivering their content straight to users via a customized app. One tap, and you're looking at the headlines from their newspaper, or the top clips from their latest newscast.

It's an ever-expanding category. Here are a couple of my favorites:

○ **The New York Times.** The Gray Lady has always put lots of its dough into moving beyond the concept of mashed-up soybeans smeared on top of mashed-up tree pulp, and its iPhone app shows their enthusiasm for new media and new ideas (see Figure 9-4). It's probably the closest to the true experience of reading a newspaper. It's very, very easy to "graze" through the electronic edition and discover news items that you never would have actively searched for but which you're glad you found. And it's free, free, free.

○ **Associated Press Mobile News Network.** News isn't about some dude camera-phoning a picture to a blog. It's about journalism. And that's why I like apps like the *NYT*'s and this one, from the Associated Press (see Figure 9-5). In addition to the usual collection of categories, the AP's app is embroidered with the sort of photo and video content that makes you appreciate a 3G connection.

○ **NowLocal.** The iPhone's built in location-awareness makes a lot of incredible ideas possible and only *some* of them involve driving from the airport to a conference room at the Ramada Inn.
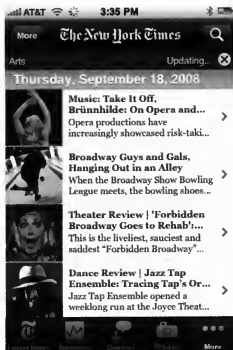

Figure 9-4

Read all over: *The New York Times* iPhone app

○ **Witness NowLocal.** It retrieves your current location and then assembles the latest news *exclusively* from local sources. In Figure 9-6, I'm getting stories of interest to folks in Boston. Nothing to navigate to, nothing to select. You're in Boston, so you're looking at Boston local news. Brilliant.

Of course, all this presumes that you want to sit down and ingest the news as a destination in and of itself. But there's a *lot* of information out there in the world and some great tools to help you soak it all up in one big gooey porridge.

So maybe a dedicated news source isn't the right answer for you. With the newsreader
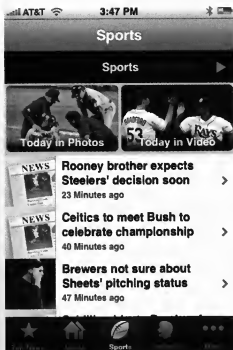
Figure 9-5
News from the Associated Press: more media, more message

Figure 9-6
Getting the local flavah in Bahston with NowLocal

services and apps in the next section, you can tell a separate app to follow, sort, and update your favorite news sources *for* you and present it in the same wobbly list of content that's showing you the photos your pals have posted to a photo site, what your favorite author is blogging about, and how surf conditions are like in Wisconsin right about now.

(Actually, I can tell you that right now: Calm. Very, very calm.)

BLOGS AND NEWSREADERS

Everyone brings their own specific needs to a smartphone. Some want killer e-mail, others want to manage blazing furies of
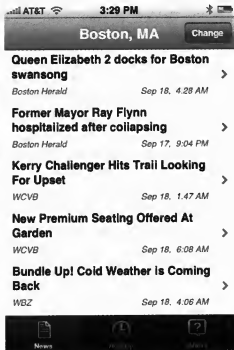
incoming and outgoing calls, while others really want a great media player that can also be used to call out for pizza.

I've had smartphones for a few years now and to me, the killer feature of an Internet-enabled phone is its ability to access a news-reader and blog aggregator services like Bloglines.com and Google Reader, two free online services that act practically like a TiVo for the Web. You tell it what sites and blogs you're interested in — from newspapers with international reputations to your friend's MySpace page with his habit of posting florid videos of hockey fights — and it'll keep an eye on 'em for you. And when you're in the mood for a little readin', they'll direct

Figure 9-7
This symbol in a browser's
address bar means the site
has an RSS feed.

you to all the pieces that interest you.

The next time you wander through the
Web using Internet Explorer or Firefox or
the desktop edition of Safari, keep an eye
peeled on the right side of the browser win-
dow's address bar. On most sites, you'll see
a little icon like the one in Figure 9-7. In
Safari, it's a little blue pill marked RSS.

These are great things to see. And it's not
that sort of mixed-blessing reaction you
have when you peek into the kitchen of your
favorite restaurant and spot three full rat-
traps. "Maybe this means they got 'em all,"
you think, hopefully. No, a Web site with
syndicated content is *incontrovertible* good
news for you, the home viewer.

Because it means that the Web site con-
tains a little invisible file that maintains an
up-to-the-second catalogue that records
and summarizes all the site's content. That
file (known as a "syndication feed") isn't

TIDBIT

For more info about RSS and
the awesome things your
iPhone or iPod Touch can do
with it, check out Chapter 10,
which is a series of tricks and
techniques for exploiting RSS.
Many of my most favorite shortcuts for
the iPhone are in that chapter.

designed to be read by humans. It's there to
be loaded and examined by software that
can use that data to decide what's new and
interesting on the site and the software can
even determine which articles you've already
read and what's been posted just since your
last visit.

The upshot is that instead of hitting hun-
dreds of sites to see if they've been updated
recently, and *then* hoping that some of the
content is actually interesting, these online
apps will do that work *for* you.

Plug http://reader.google.com into your
desktop browser to take a look at Google
Reader, my favorite newsreader service. It
ain't the iPhone edition, but it'll show you
what I mean. Figure 9-8 shows you what
my world looked like a moment ago. The
column on the left contains some of the
hundreds of blogs and news sites that I've
told Reader to keep an eye on. The fact that
they're showing up in the list at all means
that there are articles I haven't read; the num-
ber to the right of the name tells me how
many.

Figure 9-8 is the top page: It's showing me
a reverse-chronological list of all the latest
items posted to all my favorite sites. I can
read most of them right in Google Reader,
without even visiting the sites directly. Some
sites only make article summaries available to
services like Reader. It's enough to get a sense
of the piece and if I'm interested, one click
takes me to the page.

Naturally, Google Reader has a very slick
iPhone edition of its service (see Figure 9-9),
which can be accessed from the same URL as
the desktop edition.

As if the desktop edition weren't good
enough! With the iPhone version, I can eat
a quick sandwich with my right hand while

Figure 9-8
Google Reader: all the news stuff from all your favorite sites

keeping up with all of my news sites with the other. A long list shows me just the sites that have been updated. I've tapped on the Bad Astronomy blog and here are all the fresh articles; tapping on a headline expands it for reading.

The other major online newsreader service is Bloglines, accessible at bloglines.com for desktops and http://i.bloglines.com for iPhone and iPod Touch users.

Both services allow you to build collections of subscriptions. One for news, one for your friends' blogs, one for online comic strips — each one cutting your enormous toilet-paper-like scroll of subscriptions down to just the handful you want to focus on at any given moment. I prefer Google, and so that's the example I'm using for the rest of this section.

But they both work on the same principle.

You've been reading your favorite blogs via your desktop browser at your office. At 4:20, you write "5:12 p.m." on your timesheet and go to the park. You crack open a Yoo-Hoo, observe the squirrels, and wonder what it must be like to experience that sense of total, naked freedom for once in your life.

Then you fish your iPhone out of your pocket and open Google Reader in Safari. Presto: Reader is exactly as you left it. It knows which articles you've read already and automatically removes them from the list. Oh, some new articles have been posted in the past half an hour? Cool, they've been placed at the top of the list.

Adding Subscriptions to Bloglines and Google Reader

These newsreaders become more and more useful as you keep bookmarking more and

Figure 9-9
Google Reader: the iPhone experience

Figure 9-10
You add bookmarks to these services from any browser window, via bookmarklets that you install yourself.

---

more sites from your desktop browser. All you need to do to have the service track a site is to paste its URL into a special Subscribe form on the service's Web site.

(And "subscribe" doesn't mean what it does in the magazine world. There's no fee for subscribing to a site's syndication feed. Nor are there any of those annoying little subscription cards that fall in your lap when you're trying to find out what's the deal with Angelina Jolie's husband. No wonder print is a dying medium.)

But both services offer a much quicker and simpler mechanism: a Subscribe to This Webpage bookmarklet that you simply add to your browser's bookmarks bar. With one of these bookmarklets installed, you just

click on the bookmarklet and a subscription to whatever blog or news site you happen to be eyeing at the moment will automatically be added. Figure 9-10 shows you the Google Reader Subscribe bookmarklet. Bloglines's works the same way.

You can find Bloglines's bookmarklet at bloglines.com/help/easysub. You can find Google Reader's bookmarklets by clicking on the service's Settings tab in the browser window.

These bookmarklets install the same way, no matter which desktop browser you use. Just drag it *straight* off the Web page and into your browser's Bookmarks bar, underneath the address bar. Once it's in place, just click it whenever you're visiting a site you'd like to track.

Native Newsreader Apps

So. Reader. Bloglines. I love 'em. But! They both have a key weakness. You have thirty seconds to buzz in. Remember, this is for that pair of Rally mountain bikes ...

Yes! Well done. "They may *look* like applications, but they're actually Web pages being accessed via the iPhone's Internet connection."

(That wasn't in the form of a question but hey, I'm easy.)

Which means, of course, that these services are no good to you when you're *sans* network. As in: in the middle of a four-hour flight, sitting in that bit of my house

TIP

Bloglines and Google Reader have an extra little feature: They let you search blog postings for a specific term or phrase.

That's damned handy, particularly when you're trying to find opinions of the general public or trying to get a bead on a story that's so new that the major news organizations have yet to really pick up on it.

I'm not ashamed to admit it — I mean, I'm ashamed that I do this, but I'm not particularly ashamed to cop to it to you nice folks — but after I give a talk to a large audience or make an appearance on network TV … well, yeah, I do a blog search to see what people have to say about it.

It's not so much an ego thing so much as it's a way to figure out if people were creeped out by how I was off screen halfway through. Look, I was distracted by a duck.

---

separated from the rest of the house by a Wi-Fi-blocking brick wall, or (to my enduring annoyance) anywhere in the state of Vermont.

The ideal solution would be a piece of software that slurps down all those news articles when there's an Internet connection presence, and stores and sorts them on your iPhone where you can read them at your leisure. And what great news, there are many such apps available at the App Store.

My favorite newsreader app is Manifesto (see Figure 9-11).

Why? Whereas most iPhone newsreader apps work great with a couple of dozen sites, Manifesto works great even with a few *hundred* sites. And believe me after a year of using Google Reader, you'll have that many sites bookmarked.

Speaking of Google Reader, another reason for Manifesto is how closely it works with the service. Less than a minute after purchasing the app, I had pointed Manifesto at my Google Reader account and all my Reader subscriptions were Manifesto subscriptions.
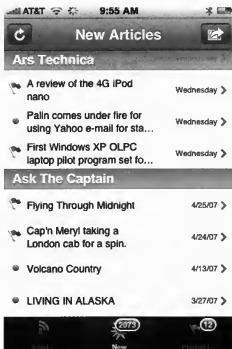
Figure 9-11
The Whole World, downloaded to your iPhone, thanks to Manifesto
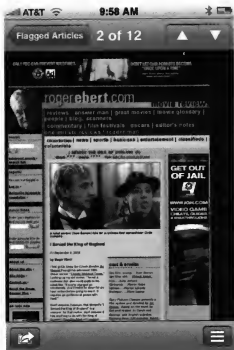
Figure 9-12
Manifesto downloads new articles directly to your iPhone.

Figure 9-13
Newsstand puts a pretty face on news reading.

But the big win of Manifesto is that it's simply the most iPhone-like newsreader available. It was conceived with taps and finger-flicks in mind. Figure 9-11 shows you my usual view of the app after I've launched it. It's shows an aggregated list of every unread article in every site I've subscribed to.

If a story sounds interesting, I tap the bullet to the left of the headline to "flag" it. Its content is immediately downloaded to the iPhone. When I'm done making my choices, I tap the Flagged tab and there they all are. It's all on the phone so I can read them at my leisure.

I love the flexibility of the app. If I'm at the burrito place with the free Wi-Fi, I don't bother downloading articles. I'm just grazing for info. I scroll through the list of new articles and tap on any interesting headline to read the article immediately. At the other extreme, if I'm strapped into seat 14A waiting for everybody to board, I know that I'm going to have to switch to Airplane Mode in about ten minutes and lose the Internet for six whole hours. No time to be choosy, so I just tap Flag All, which causes Manifesto to download every headline available, all at once.

And sometimes I just want to know the latest Apple news. So I can flip to the Feeds tab and tap on Macworld.com directly. Downloaded pages open directly in Manifesto, too; I don't even need to switch to

Safari (see Figure 9-12).

That sort of freedom of choice is very valuable. I typically have only a couple of gigabytes free, thanks to all the movies and music I keep on my iPhone. So I appreciate how Manifesto lets me travel light.

There are other creature comforts as well. Every newsreader should have a handy feature for e-mailing articles to people; I often e-mail articles to myself when I'm reading Manifesto at the burrito place. This way, I know that a certain news item that I need for an upcoming column will be safe and sound on my desktop inbox when I get back to the office.

I mean, if the app is *this* good as a Version 1.0, I can't wait to see what the future holds. A big, big win. It's one hell of a bargain for $1.99.

Honorable mentions: Newsstand ($4.99) is very pretty (Figure 9-13 shows off its flashiest mode), but it isn't nearly as handy as Manifest when you're staying on top of hundreds of sites. Byline (see Figure 9-14) is probably faster and more efficient at the "just grab the latest articles and make sure the iPhone in my pocket is always up to date" angle than Manifesto. I just think Manifesto is more flexible, that's all.

Plus: Byline costs $9.99. It just doesn't feel like a ten-dollar app.

BOOKMARKS

The syncing of bookmarks between your desktop browser and your iPhone's browser is a fundamental feature, and Apple couldn't make it easier: Check Sync Bookmarks in iTunes and it's done.

But I don't like it. The feature tanks. First, it only works with Safari. My favorite desktop browser is Firefox. Many Windows users
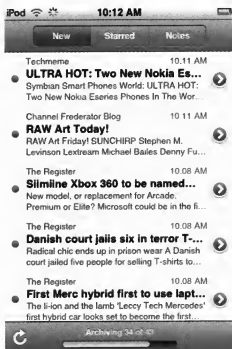

Figure 9-14
Byline: fast, efficient, ... expensive

still like Internet Explorer.

And despite my aforementioned "if I love it so much, why don't I marry it?" relationship with Google Reader and Bloglines, I do indeed have lots and lots of sites bookmarked on my desktop, but very few of them have *any* relevance to what I do on my iPhone. So when I'm on the go, the site I actually want is quickly lost in that big soup. I can create a separate desktop folder for the sites I use on my iPhone, but that fails, too.

See, I need to actually *think* in order to use that method. That's the weak point in any plan, I find.

My goal is to have access to the sites and services that I find memorable, without cluttering up the Bookmarks page of either my

Figure 9-15
Bookmarking a Web page using the Delicious service

desktop or iPhone browser. The solution: Use a bookmarking service that stores your bookmarks in a central location where they can be accessed by any Internet device you own, including the iPhone.

DELICIOUS

The most popular standard for Internet-based syncing is the free online service Delicious (http://delicious.com) — yes, this is the service formerly known as Del.icio.us. It has much the same ginchiness as Google Reader and Bloglines. You can "bookmark" a site to Delicious by either pasting the URL into a form on the site or just clicking a familiar bookmarklet that handles the job automatically.

You can also install Delicious plug-ins for all popular browsers. With the plug-in installed, you just click a Delicious button in your browser, and your current page will be bookmarked at the service.

In Figure 9-15, I'm bookmarking a site using the form on Delicious's Web site. As

you can see, you're recording way more than just a name and a URL. You can also add a description, as well as Delicious's most powerful feature: "tags" that organize the site under as many categories as you want.

So you really don't *need* to organize your bookmarks into folders. Once you've logged in to Delicious.com, you can see a reverse-chronological list of your bookmarks. Want to see a list of all your science blogs? No sweat. Whether you're using Delicious via Delicious.com or a plug-in, just click on the Science tag. Figure 9-16 shows how easy it is to use Delicious via the Firefox plug-in. Presto: There are all my Science bookmarks in one handy list, with the freshest ones first.

Hmm. It seems like this whole section is just a promo for the desktop editions of Delicious.

Trust me: We're about to get into the iPhone thing here. The service offers two things that make it the essential iPhone bookmarking utility.

First, thanks to its tagging feature, it's very,
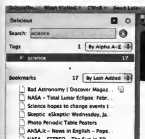
Figure 9-16 Retrieving a bookmark using Delicious's Firefox plug-in

Figure 9-17 Accessing your stored bookmarks via the Bookmarks app.

very easy to have hundreds or thousands of bookmarks and retrieve the one you want at a moment's notice — or even just get an overview of all bookmarked pages with the same general topic.

Second, because the bookmarks are stored in a central location, you never need to worry about synchronizing bookmarks between your desktop and your iPhone. Hell, or your office PC and your home Mac. It's all the same pool.
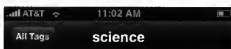
It's sort of odd that Delicious doesn't offer a special iPhone Web interface. The regular page opens just fine, of course. You can do better with the free Bookmarks app (see Figure 9-17). Tap on a keyword from the scrolling list to see all your related Web sites; a single tap takes you to the site via Safari.

The regular Delicious Web page opens just fine on your iPhone in Safari. The main site will allow you to access some of Delicious's bigger features, like being able to search your bookmarks for specific tags and descriptions.

Let's revisit one important detail of how bookmarks arrive on Delicious: *Someone thought this Web page was so valuable that they didn't want to forget it.*

That's a pretty solid endorsement, wouldn't you say?

When I'm hoping to find something *specific* on the Web, my first weapon isn't Google. It's Delicious. If I'm looking for

a good free antispyware utility, a Google search will turn up dozens if not hundreds of online ads from companies trying to sell me something. But if I plug "antispyware" "utility" and "free" into Delicious search box, the gems are immediately apparent. Sure, there will be some duds, but hey, willya look at that: There's one link that's been saved by more than 3,200 users. I'm guessing that this is a terrific resource.

Similarly, you should make use of Delicious's "popular" and "recent" links, for a look at what the world seems to be interested in all of a sudden. For your convenience, you can even bookmark direct links to those lists: http://delicious.com/popular and http://

TIP

Quick, look back at Figure 9-15. Notice what happened when I tried to bookmark Bad Astronomy? Delicious recommended a whole *bunch* of related tags for the site.

See, millions of people use Delicious. When you bookmark a page that other folks have already bookmarked, the service pulls the most popular tags other users have assigned to that site.

This community feature makes Delicious one *hell* of a useful search site.

For example, when you search for "popover recipe" on Google, it returns every page on the Internet that features those two words.

And because a high Google ranking is commercially valuable, the top page is often full of links to commercial pages that want to sell you breakfast cookbooks and popover pans and God knows what else.

So whenever I want to get a hold of *useful* results, I do a keyword search among the millions of pages that Delicious users have bookmarked.

Think about what a

Delicious bookmarked site means: it means that at some point, a real, live human visited this page and thought "Wow! This is definitely useful enough to remember!"

That's a really powerful statement. A popover recipe that's been Delicious-ed 183 times by other users must be the Real Deal.

(Oh, incidentally: cup of flour, cup of milk, half a teaspoon of salt, two eggs. Beat the egg and milk, then mix in the dry ingredients and bake in half-filled muffin cups in a 450-degree preheated oven.)

delicious.com/recent. Those are great links; they help you to find wonderful articles and resources even when you have no idea what you want to look for.

It really is marvelous, the way Delicious is organized. You can bookmark searches for *any* tag in plain English. If you're interested in the Red Sox, for example, bookmark http://delicious/tag/redsox. It'll always take you to Delicious's newest Red Sox-related tags.

And! All these Delicious searches and pages are wired with syndication feeds. So go right ahead! Go to Delicious.com, search for "Space elevator," and bookmark the results page in Google Reader. Now, every time someone reads an article about developments on the technology for moving satellites and

people into orbit on a 100-mile long carbon fiber ribbon (don't laugh; it's being tried) and bookmarks it in Delicious, it'll appear alongside all the other online info you're tracking.

(I'm sitting back in my chair now and trying to figure out if I've done a good thing or not.)

Bookmarks are dead-simple. They're effective, they're handy, and they do the job they were designed to do. Couldn't be easier to use, either.

But somehow ... *that's just not enough.*

Some of us — yes, mainly I'm thinking "me" — have to pervert this Zen-like perfection by introducing new twists that add new power and functionality. That's fine, but now I have you people thinking, "This page is Delicious, I think."

Well, if I can't resist the urge to muck

things up, I'm following in some fairly illustrious footsteps. God created the egg. Smooth, round, meditatively beautiful. He *could* have left well enough alone, but what did he go and do?

He had a platypus break out of it. Go figure.

10

What a Friend We Have in RSS

The Skim

RSS Has a Plan for Your Life ◉
Bookmark Your Most Useful Web Searches as RSS Feeds ◉
Mushing Several RSS Feeds into a Big Filtered Collective ◉
One of the Best Tips in This Whole Damned Book

Funny, isn't it, that none of the commercials for the iPhone or the iPod Touch mention that the Web browser features a fairly mature self-contained RSS/XML reader. Because as far as I'm concerned, the features on this thing are numbered thusly:

1. Desktop-class Web browser and e-mail.
2. Best pocket media player anywhere.
3. Exciting library of third-party apps.
4. Awesome RSS support in the Web browser.
5. And then there's something about being able to place and receive phone calls or something, I don't know; I wasn't really listening too hard to the announcements.

I mean, we were all pretty keen to get our hands on the iPhone after it was first announced, but there are so many features that you don't really appreciate until after you walk around with the thing in your pocket for a few weeks. I couldn't have predicted that Safari RSS would have made it into that list of the most useful features about the iPhone, and yet here I am, sneaking in a whole chapter about it.

It's great to use this feature for the purpose for which it was intended (skim through summarized views of certain RSS-enabled Web sites and blogs) but there are so many ways to *exploit* them that I couldn't resist sharing a few of 'em here.

RSS HAS A PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

RSS stands for "Really Simple Syndication." Colloquially, it refers to the "newsfeed" of a Web site. There's the site itself, with all the words and pictures laid out so nicely in pages for the benefit of humans, but then there's a little file tucked away on the server that contains all that information in a nice, structured database-y sort of format.

So while humans may examine the Web pages, *software* can examine the feed. "Forget the ads and the pictures of the blog's author doing rude things next to the wax statue of Brad Pitt near Times Square," a news aggregator service like Google Reader commands. "This guy last visited your site 21 hours ago. Just show me the articles that have been posted since then. I'll format it nicely along with little summaries so he can pick and choose the articles he actually wants to see."

It actually delivers two different kinds of flexibility, because it pretty much hands off the site's raw data to the software of your choice. This software can search, sort, and filter it in any way you choose — and it has complete control over how that data is formatted and displayed, too. A Web page is concrete; a Web site's feed is clay.

Chapter 9 talks about some great news "aggregators" — Web-based and native apps that deliver all the fresh content from all of your favorite sites in a unified, tidy, scrolling interface.
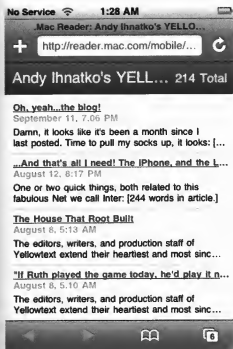
Figure 10-1
Yellowtext, my humble blog

But Safari has its own built-in RSS reader. If you visit my blog at cwob.com, you'll see it as a regular Web page (see Figure 10-1). But if you zoooooooom in on the upper-corner

Figure 10-2
When you see one of these symbols on a Web page, it's usually a link to the site's RSS feed.

Figure 10-3
My blog, re-interpreted by Safari as just a pile of streamlined iPhone-screen-filling content

of the blog, you'll notice a funny-looking orange XML logo (see Figure 10-2). That's one of the universal symbols meaning "this button is a link to the site's RSS feed." If you tap the button, Safari will read and process the feed and then you'll see my blog presented as Figure 10-3. Safari only opens the actual Web site when I tap on the headline of an article I want to read and it'll open the page on that specific article.

If you tap the New Bookmark button at this point, Safari will generate a bookmark to this RSS feed and not to the Web page itself. So every time you open this bookmark, you'll open the site in its RSS view.

Gosh, Figure 10-3 makes my blog look purty. This brings us nicely to the first thing I use Safari's RSS feature for.

BOOKMARK YOUR MOST USEFUL WEB SEARCHES AS RSS FEEDS

If I'm about to bookmark a page that I'm apt to visit often, I'll hunt for the page's RSS feed instead of bookmarking the page directly. Because it's *always* faster and more convenient to see all a site's content in one slick, scrolling list of plain text than as a Web page.

Particularly when you don't have a high-speed Wi-Fi connection to the Internet. When you access a site's RSS feed, your iPhone only has to download a small amount of text. When you access the page itself, Safari has to download every article, every photo, every ad, every *everything*.

But RSS isn't just a way of reading Web pages. Syndication is such a powerful, flexible, and ubiquitous concept on the Web that it tends to turn up in the strangest places.

No kiddin'. Many sites not only let you do searches, but the server will deliver the results of that search as an RSS feed that it will build for you on-the-fly. Some examples:

○ **eBay.** Do a search and then examine the results closely. Aha! Look at the bottom of the search results: There's that familiar orange syndication logo. Give it a tap, and you'll see Figure 10-4, assuming you were searching for *Star Wars* memorabilia. And if you tap an individual auction item, you'll note that eBay's search feed actually returns a pretty rich experience. You can see pretty much everything you'd see if you were looking at the actual Web page (see

Figure 10-4
An eBay search, bookmarked as a nice, efficient RSS feed

Figure 10-5
RSS search results shows you all the info you'd get if you were actually looking at eBay's Web page.

Figure 10-5).

○ **Technorati blog search**. Yes, I know. You *never* search for your own name to see if people are talking about you. Never ever ever. But conceptually, if you *were* ever that full of yourself, you could bookmark it and any time the whim struck, you could see what those lying jerks are doing while your back is turned.

○ **Digg.com user-recommended Web sites**. As I explained in Chapter 9, Digg. com has a nice iPhone-specific Web app for browsing what's hot on the Web; sites that have been recommended and posted to the service by the community

of Digg users. But you don't need to use it, really because each section and search is backed by RSS and if you're specifically interested in news and sites about the Boston Red Sox, you can bookmark an RSS feed that always contains the most recently recommended sites about the Sox.

○ Indeed, nearly every service you can name is wired with RSS. Open http:// delicious/tag/iphone to see the latest hot iPhone pages and apps posted to the Delicious service. Then click on the RSS badge on the page and bookmark it. Presto: You'll never be more than a
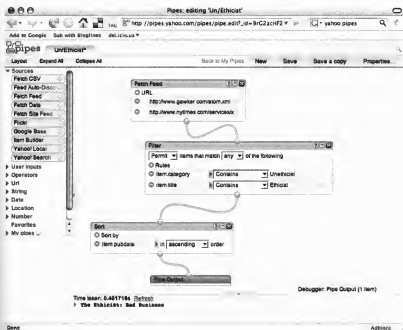
Figure 10-6
Yahoo Pipes lets you build RSS feeds that don't already exist, but should.

that allow you to build your *own* RSS feeds. My favorite tool is hosted by Yahoo and it's called Yahoo Pipes (http://pipes.yahoo.com).

On your desktop browser, you literally sketch out what you'd like your new RSS feed to look like.

step away from breaking events in the iPhone world.

I swear, your eyes will become so keenly tuned to spotting RSS badges on Web pages as a hawk's are for spotting small, scared scampering things in a meadow.

MUSHING SEVERAL RSS FEEDS INTO A BIG FILTERED COLLECTIVE

Sometimes no single RSS feed can collect the info you want. Take online comic strips, for example. They're usually published online by their creators. These strips are wonderful but do I really want to click on forty separate links each and every morning while I eat my Froot Loops?

Fortunately, there are some simple tools

It's really very simple. Figure 10-6 shows you one of my pipes. "The Ethicist" is a great column on *The New York Times*'s site that answers questions about ethics sent in by readers. Snarky site Gawker.com published a funny parody of it called the "*Un-Ethicist*" that answers the same questions, but from a slightly different point of view.

I like both columns, and this pipe mashes them together into a single feed. It's actually doing two tricky things. Neither column has its own separate RSS feed, so this pipe searches NYTimes.com and Gawker.com's RSS feeds, culls out only those articles that match those two column titles, and then combines them into a single new feed that I can subscribe to in Safari.

There are tons of ways to exploit this. One

of my other fave pipes is a "Morning Funnies" RSS feed that puts all of my favorite morning Web comics into one lonnnng roll, like the comics section of a paper. Two dozen individual links have been combined into one single bookmark.

Oh, and I certainly can't let you go before telling you …

ONE OF THE BEST TIPS IN THIS WHOLE DAMNED BOOK

… because — wouldn't you know it? — it takes advantage of Safari's RSS reader.

Observe the following points:

1. The iPhone and the iPod Touch both have wicked-fast Wi-Fi connections to the Internet, baked right in.

2. The iPhone 3G has a wicked-fast 3G connection to the Internet, from lots of places in the country.

3. The tricks I mention in Chapter 19 notwithstanding, it's damned-near impossible to listen to anything on your iPhone or iPod Touch unless you have access to a Mac or PC and a sync cable.

4. A lot of the stuff you like to listen to — like podcasts — are disposable entertainment. You listen to the newscast and you're done with it; from that point onward, the podcast is just taking up valuable space.

And now consider the ongoing disappointments that points 3 and 4 engender. You're in a waiting room somewhere. Your dentist is running late. If you knew that you'd be stuck here for two hours instead of twenty minutes, you'd have brought a book. As it is, you have your iPhone. But you forgot to sync it this morning, and you've already heard all of yesterday's podcasts.

Ah! But you know there's a brand new episode of *Fanboy Radio* on the podcast's Web server. Just sitting there waiting for you.

You can't sync it to your iPhone from here. But you *can* play that episode "live," streaming it directly from the server.

How? A podcast exists on the server as two components. There's the audio or video file that iTunes downloads, and then there's (yes indeed) the RSS feed file that describes the content and helps iTunes (or any other podcatcher app) figure out that a new show has been uploaded.

So if you bookmark this podcast feed *directly* — either directly in Safari, or via Google Reader, Manifesto, or any other RSS newsreader — you'll be able to play any podcast you want whenever you want so long as you have a live Internet connection. The bookmark will eventually lead you to a list of new episodes, and link that downloads and plays the MP3 episode you want to hear.

All you need to do is find the podcast or video podcast's RSS file or direct Web site, and bookmark it in Safari or your newsreader. That's simple enough:

1. Find the show in your list of subscribed podcasts.

2. Click on the Podcasts item under Library in your iTunes window.

3. Right-click or Control+click on the title to bring up the item's pop-up menu. Make sure you click on the title of the overall podcast, not on any individual episode.

4. Select Show Description from the pop-up menu.

5. iTunes will open a little window describing the show. The URL for the podcast's RSS feed will be right at the

top (see Figure 10-7).

If you want to use a podcast that you haven't subscribed to in iTunes, you'll have to do a Google search for the podcast's Web page. If you examine the Web page you should be able to spot an orange button that links to the feed.

Type this feed's URL into Safari, and look at what happens: you wind up with a nice, RSS-ey list of all the shows in the podcast (see Figure 10-8). You can just choose an episode that seems interesting. If you're using a different RSS reader, you'll see a slightly different view, but it's all roughly the same procedure.

But let's focus on Safari Reader. So we can stop to curse Apple, just a little bit.

In Version 1 of Safari for iPhone and iPod Touch, the built-in Reader was more than happy to play a linked media file directly from Reader. Thrilled to, in fact. "Aren't you clever for figuring this trick out?" Safari Reader seemed to say.

But under Version 2, nothing doing. You have to tap the link for Show Original, which will take you to the podcast's Web page, where you will find a link to the episode's actual MP3 audio file (see Figure 10-9). Tap on *that*, and you'll see a standard media player, which will happily download and play the file (see Figure 10-10) if it's a media type that the iPhone or iPod Touch can handle. And that's almost a certainty.

It works flawlessly. If you have a Wi-Fi or 3G connection to the Internet you can stream audio or video. But even if you're stuck with EDGE service, you can still listen to audio just fine.

Safari's RSS capability is truly my kind of feature. It's nice to have something as muscular and well-articulated as the iPod

Figure 10-7

Tracking down the podcast's RSS feed

Figure 10-8

Your podcast, shown as a list of RSS show descriptions

application, but it never does more for you than what Apple intended it to do. But a feature like RSS is so broad and powerful that it invites you to keep coming up with new ways to exploit it.

And so long as developers of Web sites

Initiative. Tune
in for callers
and Sub Or
Flub!
Direct download:
fbr_487.mp3
Category: **Creator
Interviews** --
posted at: 1:25 AM

Figure 10-9
A link to the actual online MP3 file is
embedded in the episode description.

Figure 10-10
Streaming live geekery without syncing
your iPhone or iPod Touch via iTunes

and services keep coming up with new ways
to incorporate feeds into the online world,
Safari will continue to become more and
more powerful and flexible. RSS works great
with a newsreader app (again I urge you to
read Chapter 9), but like a nice ripe banana,
it's even good raw.

B
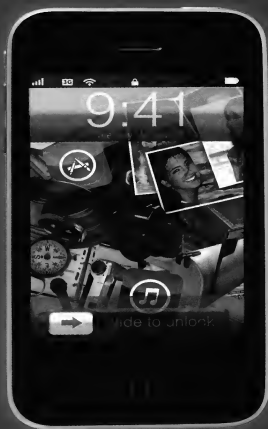
11

The Web, for Keeps

The Skim

Saving a Web Page to an iPhone File ⊚
Saving and Syncing with Instapaper ⊚ Loudest iNewsCaster

This chapter is alllllll about viewing Web pages on your iPhone or iPod Touch. "The most brilliant and valuable chapter in the whole damned book," you sneer. "The presence of a Web browser on my iPhone sort of implies that I could open Web pages quite easily, but for the past year I've been too terrified to click it."

You know, you're a thousand miles away and five months in the future as I write this. Yet it still hurts. You know? It still hurts.

Onward. No, of *course* I'm not talking about just opening Web pages in a browser. I'm talking about *keeping* the Web pages you want and need, so that you can still read 'em when you're away from an Internet connection. This chapter reveals tools and techniques that take a Web page in your desktop browser and preserves it inside a technological mason jar on your iPhone.

There are plenty of pages that beg for that sort of treatment. Like the map to the location of your corporate retreat, or an electronic receipt. Hell, you've been to parts of the Web that made you think, "I wish I could stick this page in a mason jar. With an inch or two of chloroform in it. And then bury it somewhere so that the page couldn't disturb another human being the way that it's just disturbed me."

Well, I can't help you with *those* kinds of pages. But with the useful kinds … read on.

TIDBIT

There's additional motive to *saving* a Web page instead of merely bookmarking it: You've no idea what's going to happen to that site in the next three weeks to 40 years. It's *exactly* the information you need to properly prepare the puffer fish for your dinner party without killing anybody who doesn't deserve it. But sure enough, a week later, "law enforcement" (whatever *that* means) has forced the site to take the page down.

When you download the page to your hard drive, nobody can take it away from ya.

SAVING A WEB PAGE TO AN IPHONE FILE

Chapter 19 tells you how to install document files on an iPhone. So the first and obvious solution is to export the Web page to a format that the iPhone can read natively. Get the Web page on the iPhone or iPod Touch using any of the techniques in Chapter 19 — such as simply e-mailing it to yourself — and the device's built-in reader will handle the rest.

You're sitting pretty if you use the Mac version of Safari. This app can export the current Web page in Apple's Web Archive format (just go to File ▶ Save As and chose Web Archive as the export format. The result will be a single file that bundles the Web page with all its associated graphics and other resources. Natcherly, the iPhone with its built-in Safari browser can open and display this file just about as well as it can display the

original page (see Figure 11-1).

If you're using Firefox, Internet Explorer, or the Windows version of Safari, you can still export the page as HTML. In Firefox or Internet Explorer, choose Web Page, Complete as your export format. In Windows Safari, choose HTML Files. The resulting page won't be *quite* as pretty as Figure 11-1, but it'll have all the text and most of the pictures and formatting. Figure 11-2 shows what I mean.

Exporting in *some* sort of Web-native format is the most convenient solution to the problem. If utter perfect reproduction is required regardless of the browser, export the Web page as a PDF.

All Macs have Print-to-PDF hard-wired right into the standard printer driver. Just select Save as PDF from the PDF pop-up menu in the Print dialog box.

Windows machines acquire this feature when you make the correct incantation to your Web browser. The incantation is unpronounceable by human lips, but when the runes of its bizarre shape are cast, the lines look remarkably like a URL: http://pdfforge.org/products/pdfcreator to be specific.

Translated: Download PDFCreator, a utility that creates a new Print To PDF printer driver.

Yes? I see a hand up at the back? "Can't I just do a select-all on the page, copy the text, paste it into a text document, and then put *that* on my iPhone?"

Yes. Yes, you could.

You could also wear a plastic clip-on bowtie to a job interview with the FBI.

(A text file! Of all the …)

SAVING AND SYNCING WITH INSTAPAPER

Turning a Web page into a file works just

Figure 11-1
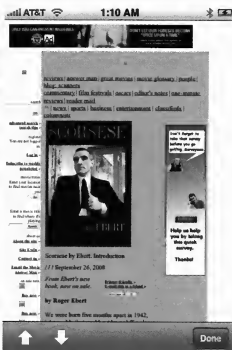A saved Web page exported from Safari on a Mac

Figure 11-2
The same saved Web page from Figure 11-1, this time exported from Firefox

fine, but there are multiple steps to creating the file and then more steps to putting it on your iPhone. And worst of all, your idle desire to have a 12-page interview with the designer of your favorite Wonder Woman action figure isn't costing any third party any money.

A free iPhone app (available from the App Store, naturally) is the grateful solution to those problems. Instapaper is a free online service that lets you "save" Web pages of interest to a centralized server at instapaper. com and then view them later, online or off, at your leisure. Visit the site, sign up for a free account, and install the Read Later bookmarklet in your bookmarks bar.

TIP

No matter which method you use to save a Web page, click the Web page's View on One Page or Printable Version link if there is one. The site will reformat the page so that it prints well … which is to say that it'll reformat it so that it looks great when reformatted for the iPhone screen.
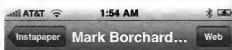
Figure 11-3
A collection of saved and downloaded Web pages on my iPhone, thanks to Instapaper

Figure 11-4
Instapaper creates a nice, comfy reading experience.

From that point on, if a page is halfway interesting, it's worth clicking the Read Later bookmark. Instapaper.com will cache the contents of the URL you're currently viewing on its own servers.

To download your saved Web pages on your iPhone, launch the Instapaper app and then tap the Update button (see Figure 11-3). All those pages will be slurped down into the phone's storage, safe and sound, and viewable in the app's own text reader (see Figure 11-4).

I like Instapaper. Not the least because it understands that I'm likely to be settling in to read a really cool but somewhat long article. As a book reader, it's a nice, simple, clean interface.
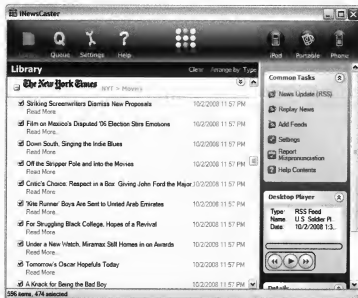
LOUDEST: INEWSCASTER

But what if you're not in the mood for using your eyeballs today? Meaning: You're acting all petulant because of a perceived slight that your eyes made over the breakfast table. Or maybe it's just that you're driving and you want to listen to blog posts for a half hour instead of reading them and killing many, many people.

Magnetic Time (magnetictime.com) has a nifty product for both PCs and Macs. iNewsCaster is an RSS reader that works like any other newsreader app … up to a point. Like the apps I cover in Chapter 9, you simply provide the app with the URLs to the syndication feeds of your favorite blogs

and news sites and it automatically downloads and presents all the new, unread articles for your pleasure.

Decidedly *unlike* the others, iNewsCaster actually *reads* the articles into an iPhone-compatible sound file, using a soothingly natural synthetic voice.

It's thirty bucks, but you can download a free trial to see how well the thing works.

The Windows Edition

Figure 11-5 shows iNewsCaster's main window. As you can see, the app has been busy, grabbing headlines from a bunch of different sources.

You can add sites to iNewsCaster's watch list with just a few clicks:

1. Click the Add Feeds button, located in the Common Tasks pane of the main window and iNewsCaster's Settings window opens (see Figure 11-6).

2. Scroll the pane on the left until you see

Figure 11-5
iNewsCaster's news harvest
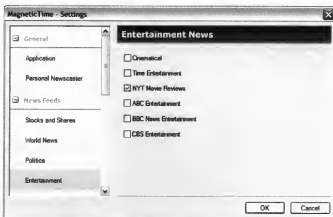
Figure 11-6
Adding newsfeeds to iNewsCaster via its built-in feed library

the News Feeds section. A number of popular news feeds are built right in, organized by category. Just click the checkbox of any feed that you'd like
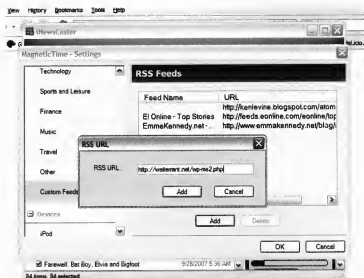
Figure 11-7
Adding a feed of your own

Figure 11-8
The magical button to start the conversion process going

iNewsCaster to keep an eye on for you. You can also add the feeds of your favorite sites and blogs manually. To do that:

1. Scroll down the list to the very last item and click on Custom Feeds.
2. Click the Add button and a dialog box appears.
3. Paste the URL to your favorite site's newsfeed into the dialog and click OK (see Figure 11-7). (Turn once again to Chapters 9 and 10 for tips on how to locate the URL for a site's newsfeed.)
4. Repeat these steps for each of your custom sites and blogs.

iNewsCaster will automatically check each of your subscribed feeds for new content, and download any fresh articles it finds.

When you want to convert these articles to spoken audio files:

1. Select the checkbox for all the articles you'd like to listen to in the car or dur-

ing your morning run.
2. Click the iPod button at the top-right corner of the screen (see Figure 11-8).

That's it; iNewsCaster will start grinding all these articles into spoken text.

The Mac Edition

The Mac version of iNewsCaster operates in nearly the same way as the Windows edition. The layout of the buttons is just a little bit different (see Figure 11-9):

☞ To add subscriptions, click the Add Feeds button at the bottom of the window to open the app's Preferences window. You can select feeds that have already been wired into iNewsCaster and add feeds of your own.

☞ To convert feeds into audio files, select the articles you find interesting and then click the Export button.

And there you go.

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Figure 11-9
iNewsCaster for
Macintosh

iNewsCaster and iTunes

No matter which app you use, the result is the same: a pile of very natural-sounding spoken-text files in iTunes, ready to be synced to your iPhone or iPod Touch.

The files will automatically be added to a new playlist called iNewsCaster. The app also identifies the tracks' artist as iNewsCaster, so it's easy to build smart playlists that automatically load just (for example) the most recent 10 converted tracks that have a running time of more than five minutes.

When I was a wee lad, the people who were running the Internet were fond of screaming, "Information wants to be *free!*" in between shoveling double-handfuls of granola and hemp dental floss into their mouths.

Well, I'm of a later generation. I have absolutely no problems incarcerating data and depriving it of its liberty. Its family may petition the governor as much as it pleases, but my heart is forever barred against sympathy.

Because (dangit) I've been stuck in an airport with no bars on my cell phone and nothing to read. *I will not let that happen again.* And so long as I'm diligent about saving or Instapapering anything I read online that's halfway interesting, I'll never go hungry again.
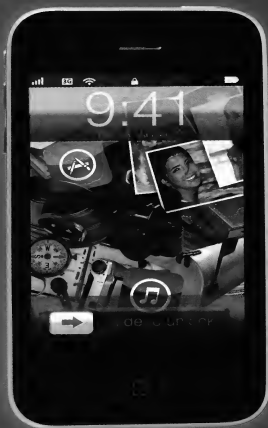
> ### TIDBIT
>
> You *might* be disappointed with some of the results, though. You're eagerly settling in, expecting to have all *The New York Times*'s film reviews read to you, but all you hear are brief summaries!
>
> Well, that's not iNewsCaster's fault. Not all feeds contain the entire text of the article. Some sites prefer that you use feedreader software just to see what's new and interesting. If you want to read the article, they want you to visit the actual site, where you might be tempted to read other articles and maybe click on some ads. Their site feed only contains article summaries.

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12

Podcasts

The Skim

Here's a spoiler alert, in case you haven't figured it out yet: The basic purpose of the Internet is to provide hundreds of thousands of jerks, dweebs, geeks, freaks, flakes, egotists, ignoramuses, nutjobs, loners, twits, arrogant pinheads, and delusional Travis Bickle aficionados a way to share their unique articulations of individual insanity with a potential audience of millions of total strangers.

Podcasting was invented when members of the above groups realized that the human population could insulate themselves from these messages by simply sealing themselves inside a metal automobile or any place where Wi-Fi signals can't penetrate or where Internet users can't read text.

Still, as podcasting became part of mainstream communication, the level of content available via podcast was raised. Now, the same shows you tune in to all the time on public radio, local stations, and national TV networks can arrive on your desktop (and thence your iPhone or iPod Touch) at regular intervals at no charge.

I should warn you that the folks who podcast from major networks and the like are (generally speaking) no less stable or egotistical than the Internet free-lancers. But at least you know they're probably making a comfortable living. A full belly tends to stifle baser urges to inflict stress and mayhem upon society.

WHAT HAPPENS WITH A PODCAST

Podcasts combine all the best technologies and infrastructures of the Internet in ways that you, the user, can safely ignore:

- Someone in the world sits down behind a microphone and records a show. They upload it to a server somewhere on the Internet.

- The server contains a little file that keeps track of each episode. It contains a description of the podcast and a synopsis of each individual episode. And, most important it contains a record of the date and time the show was first posted to the server.

- You've told iTunes that you like this show, so iTunes periodically checks this file. It's *called* a "Subscription" but not to worry, it's free, free, free. ITunes automatically downloads new episodes as they appear, and adds them to your iTunes library.

- And because you've also told iTunes to automatically copy new podcasts to your iPhone or your Touch, each morning when you snatch the device from its desktop dock and toss it into the front seat of your car, your morning commute is filled with fresh content that (a) appeared from thin air without your having done anything at all, and — thrillingly — (b) didn't cost you a penny.

Apart from the "it doesn't cost you a penny" thing, the second-most-thrilling thing about podcasts is that the content is controlled by the same fundamental principle that guides *all* the content you encounter on the Internet: "On the Internet, nobody can hear you say, 'But what's the point of this, really?'"

Which means that there's a truly dizzying array of content available. Any jerk with a $10 microphone and a two-bit opinion has access to the same means of putting their words in your ears as any of the Big Four networks. So during that morning commute, it's entirely possible that you'll be listening to last night's polished, professional, and highly illuminating broadcast edition of *ABC News: Nightline*. Then you move to the next podcast, which is a heavy-metal show by some guy named Jason from Salt Lake City, who's complaining about how he got this *awesome* Motörhead tattoo on his back, but now he feels cheated because he's the only person who never gets to actually *see* it.

When iTunes started supporting podcasts, it totally changed how I use portable players like the iPhone. And (oh, dear) it completely killed any remaining interest I had in traditional, broadcast radio. I get the best programming from all over the world, and it's available any time I want to hear it. As opposed to radio, which limits me to whatever happens to be on whatever station I happen to be able to receive in whatever city I happen to be in.

(Think about your least-favorite national radio personalities. I mean come on, do you *really* think they'd have careers if listeners had any choice in the matter?)

There's a three-pronged approach to filling your iPod with podcasts:

1. Locate a podcast that seems at least 38 percent interesting.
2. Tell iTunes to subscribe to that podcast.

Figure 12-2
The front door of the iTunes Podcast Directory

3. Configure your iPod to automatically load new episodes as they land in your iTunes library.

THE ITUNES PODCAST DIRECTORY

Apple maintains a huge and fairly ginchy searchable directory of podcasts, and you can access it straight from iTunes. But Apple is highly ecumenical and embraces podcasts from all sources; it's happy to have you subscribe to a podcast that the iTunes Podcast Directory has never heard of.

Inside the Podcast Directory

To visit the iTunes Podcast Directory, click on Podcasts in the iTunes window's Sources list and then click the Podcast Directory but-

ton in the lower-right corner of the window (see Figure 12-1).

Click the Go to Podcast Directory button to proceed. You'll quickly be connected to the entrance to the iTunes Podcast Directory (see Figure 12-2).

The iTunes Podcast Directory lives on one of Apple's servers on the Internet, not on your hard drive. So you'll need to have a live connection to the Internet to access the thing.

At this point regard yourself as not unlike young Charlie Bucket in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, no, not the Johnny Depp movie, the *good* one, the one which has a scene where the kids get to run through a little park made entirely out of candy and sample to their hearts' delight.

Figure 12-3
iTunes's Top Podcasts: It's all a popularity contest.

Figure 12-4
Featured news podcasts

Figure 12-5
Podcast categories on the Directory's front page

Obviously there's lots of eye candy at the front door. Individual podcasts get front-row attention, usually because they're new or suddenly hot, but your first clicks should probably go to the Top Podcasts list (see Figure 12-3). It's a ranking based on popularity, which almost always means that they're well-produced shows with terrific content, and new episodes come out regularly.

In the center of the window are big, colorful category buttons — your next focus of attention. Click one of these, and iTunes will take you to a selected assortment of "fea-

Figure 12-6
Searching for WBZ podcasts

tured" podcasts related to the category (see Figure 12-4).

Why *these* podcasts and not others? Because they're all produced with a professional attitude (even if they weren't necessarily produced by professional broadcasters) and are popular and regularly updated. But by no means should you conclude that there are only 100 news podcasts in the directory. To see the entire list, return to the main directory (just click the Back button at the top of the directory window; it works just like a Web browser) and feast your eyes on the Categories list (see Figure 12-5).

Click on any of these category names and you'll be taken to the front page of that particular category, which will have its own Featured Podcasts and Top Podcasts lists.

Incidentally, iTunes's main search feature (that big Search box at the upper-right hand corner of the iTunes window) will search the Podcast Directory as well as the iTunes Music Store. So if you know precisely what you're looking for — and you don't mind

Figure 12-7
Looking at a podcast

It's easy enough to find out. iTunes can search on any word that appears in the podcast listing: people, topics, places, anything. I'll just pop the call letters of local radio and TV station WBZ into Power Search, available from a link there in the upper-

right corner of the iTunes window. Witness the result (see Figure 12-6).

sifting through a bunch of music tracks that also match your search query — you'll save a couple of steps.

Again I cite the Fundamental Principle of the Internet: Apple isn't interested in stopping people from making their podcasts widely available, so if the podcaster submits the show's URL to Apple and there are no legal issues involved, Apple will add the podcast with little ado. So you'll find lots and lots and *lots* of noise and a few gems.

The Featured Podcasts lists and the iTunes Store's Search box are far more useful than scanning through thousands and thousands of individual.

I mentioned earlier that I don't listen to radio any more. I *do* listen to radio *shows*, however. I wonder if any of my local radio stations here in Boston have interesting podcasts?

Learning More about a Podcast

No matter how you hit upon a Podcast of Interest, you can find out more about the show by clicking on its little square poster image (if it's a featured podcast) or the circular arrow button next to its title (if it's turned up in a search or some other listing). iTunes will take you to the podcast's main directory listing (see Figure 12-7).

You'll have a description of the podcast, a list of all the shows available at the moment, and possibly some user comments. Clicking on the Web site link will open the show's official Web site in your Web browser. Double-click on an individual episode (or its Get Episode button) to download that episode immediately and listen to it in iTunes.

Figure 12-8
The Subscribe button

Figure 12-9
PodcastDirectory.com helps you find podcasts by a specific location.

Subscribing to Podcasts through the iTunes Directory

If you've spent some time noodling through the iTunes Podcast Directory, you've spotted Subscribe buttons here and there (see Figure 12-8). Yes indeed, this button does precisely what you think it does. Click it, and iTunes will subscribe you to that podcast. It'll start off by downloading the latest episode and adding it to your personal iTunes library. And from that point onward, iTunes will automatically download new episodes automatically. That's all there is to it.

OTHER PODCAST DIRECTORIES

As neat as the iTunes Podcast Directory is, Apple didn't invent the concept of podcasting and it doesn't own the concept, either. Nobody does. So there are plenty of podcasts available that don't appear in the iTunes Podcast Directory.

But honestly, if you eagerly download a show that doesn't appear in the iTunes Podcast Directory, be prepared to have your heart broken. Getting listed in iTunes is (a) free, (b) a simple, well-documented procedure, and (c) a fairly automatic approval from iTunes, unless you're doing something naughty, like explaining how to sneak an old Band-Aid into a bottle of beer and seal it to make it look as though it came from the factory that way, so you can maybe scam a free case from your local liquor store.

I find that the biggest advantage of the

alternative directories is that they highlight different shows and organize their content a little differently. Which means there's a good chance there's a terrific podcast buried deep inside iTunes where I'll never find, but that I *will* trip over on Odeo.com by accident.

Some swell podcast directories:

☉ **Podcastalley.com.** A strong front page. It's a directory, but it's also backed by lots of info *about* podcasts and podcasters. It's an excellent directory for discovering a podcast you'd never heard of about a topic you didn't think you'd be interested in, which nonetheless becomes one of your can't-miss shows.

☉ **PodcastDirectory.com.** This site brings some new twists to the game including its ability to search for podcasts by location of origin. So if you're spending the weekend on Cape Cod and you're specifically looking for local content, PodcastDirectory.com can quickly zone you in (see Figure 12-9).

☉ **Odeo.com.** It's very iTunes-like in that it's well organized by categories and makes it easy to spot the popular and most heavily updated podcasts. I like

Odeo.com for the same reason I use both Google and Yahoo Search when I'm looking for something on the Web: Having two different *periscopes* on a target means that you're not just relying on one set of recommendations.

○ **PodcastPickle.com.** I like this one for its discussion forums. iTunes can be a real fire hose of listings, and this directory offers a more personal approach to finding interesting shows.

SUBSCRIBING TO A PODCAST MANUALLY

Naturally, subscribing to a podcast that you discovered without the help of the iTunes Podcast Directory, or by browsing around on the Web, isn't as simple as clicking a friendly Subscribe button.

Unless the podcast has a friendly Subscribe to This Podcast in iTunes button or link, it might incorporate some flavor of the icon in Figure 12-10, which is Apple's own special "this is a link to a podcast" button. Or it might just explicitly say Subscribe with iTunes.

Or something else entirely. The thing is, the people who create Web pages are all mavericks. They're wild stallions, unbroken, untamed; they may bend your precious rules but damnit, they get the job done. Et cetera.

But it isn't terribly complicated. Remember when I told you that every podcast is represented by a simple file somewhere on the Internet? All you need to do is give iTunes the address of that file.

I apologize in advance for this, but I am forced to introduce a technical three-letter-acronym into the proceedings.

That three-letter acronym is RSS. It's the simple, worldwide standard that powers

Figure 12-10
Apple's own little podcast icon. Clicking this on a Web page might subscribe you to a podcast.
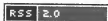
Syndication

Figure 12-11
Hunting for a podcast's RSS feed

podcasts (and Web logs and all sorts of Internet services). Technically, the address you're hunting for is known as an *RSS feed*.

If you're lucky, the Web page will have a clear, colorful link to the RSS feed, such as shown in Figure 12-11. In this case, the colored button that reads "RSS 2.0" attracts your full and immediate attention. It represents a link to that RSS feed that you want to give to iTunes. The site's designers also put the word "Syndication" above it, which is another tip off that it's a link to the podcast feed. "Feed," "XML," and "Pod" are other indicators.

Most podcast Web pages put the RSS feed in the open. Figure 12-12 shows the podcast page for a National Public Radio show.

Figure 12-12
A less-cruel display of a podcast's RSS feed.

Figure 12-13
Manually subscribing to a podcast

I mean, *now* we're talkin'. The URL is explicitly pointed out *and* there's a direct iTunes button. Your Tax Dollars, Working For You.

But no matter how nicely (or not) the podcast link is indicated, the key is to find and copy that link. Once you've found it:

1. Right-click the link. If you're using a Macintosh with a one-button mouse, hold down the Control key on your keyboard while clicking.

2. Select Copy Link or Copy Link Location (depending on which Web browser you're using).

And that's it.

Figure 12-14
A glorious cornucopia of free content

Once you've copied the link to the podcast's RSS feed, just hand it off to iTunes.

1. In iTunes, choose Advanced ♦ Subscribe to Podcast.

2. Paste the URL into the text box and click OK (see Figure 12-13).

And from that point on iTunes treats the podcast the same as it would if you'd found it in the iTunes directory. It'll add the podcast to your list of subscriptions, download the most recent episode, and then download future shows as they're published.

MANAGING PODCASTS

You can see all the podcasts you've subscribed to by clicking Podcasts in the Library section of iTunes's main window (see Figure 12-14).

If iTunes knows there are episodes that it hasn't downloaded — for instance, it's a new subscription, which would mean that iTunes only downloaded the latest show — you can manually download it by clicking the little Get button next to its title.

If there's an ! icon to the left of the podcast's title (note "Penn Radio Archive" and "NPR: My Cancer" in Figure 12-13), that means there was a problem when trying to update that item. Either the server where the audio files live isn't available, or the podcast has been discontinued. Or perhaps the Universe doesn't believe that you're one of those people who deserve to have nice things happen to you.

Updating a Podcast Manually

By default, iTunes will automatically look for new episodes of your podcasts on a regular basis. If you want iTunes to look *right freaking now* — you're about to leave the house for a three-hour drive to your

Figure 12-15
Podcast Settings let you tell iTunes how it should update your podcasts.

folks' house and you don't want to be 18 minutes in before you realize that you've already heard everything on your iPhone — just click the Refresh button in the lower-right corner of the iTunes window. (Make sure you're looking at your list of podcasts first; if you're looking at your music library, that button will say and do something else entirely.)

iTunes will update all your subscriptions immediately, automatically downloading any new shows that you don't have. If you'd like to update just one show, select Update Podcast from the podcast's contextual menu (click on the podcast's name with your right mouse button; Mac users with a one-button mouse can click while pressing the Control key). Only that one podcast will be updated.

Sometimes, for reasons known only to iTunes and perhaps Alex Trebek (who has the whole stack of question cards and therefore knows all the answers in advance), iTunes will believe that a certain podcast is inactive. That its authors are no longer creating new episodes, and thus you're no longer listening to them, and thus there's no reason to keep checking for new shows.

So if a favorite show seems to have dropped off the face of the earth, it's a good idea to do a manual Update Podcast from the contextual menu. Click on any podcast in the list and then choose Edit ♦ Select All to select all your subscribed programs. iTunes will take nothing for granted and will check *every last one* of those shows for new episodes.

Unsubscribing

If at some point in life you discover that *Shawn and Kyle's Super-Awesome Weekly Movie Podcast* is neither weekly, nor is it consistently about movies, and "barely adequate" is a stretch, let alone "Super-Awesome," you can unsubscribe from the podcast by clicking on its title and then clicking the Unsubscribe button at the lower-left corner of the iTunes window.

Changing Podcast Settings

The lower-left corner also sports a Settings button, which is where you tell iTunes how it should manage all your podcasts as a group (see Figure 12-15).

You can also access Podcast Settings through iTunes's Preferences panel (located under the iTunes menu in the Mac version and under the Edit menu in the Windows edition of iTunes).

Then, you can tell iTunes how frequently to update your podcasts, and what it should do with them after you've got 'em. Through the Check For New Episodes pop-up menu, you can tell iTunes to check hourly, daily, weekly, or manually, which means that it's entirely up to you to remember to click iTunes's Update button and check for new episodes.

And what should iTunes do when it finds new content? When New Episodes Are Available offers three choices:

○ **Download All** grabs every episode you don't have. If *The Jeff Boring McDullsworth Show* has 230 half-hour episodes available, then iTunes downloads all 230.

○ **Download the Most Recent One** does what it says. It assumes that you're not, you know, obsessive-compulsive about this sort of thing and you just want whatever's newest. But iTunes will kindly grab all the information about the shows it didn't download, and add the info to the podcast's program listings so you can peruse them at your leisure.

○ **Do Nothing** seems like a waste of a good resource. But at least it's fairly easy to understand. Instead of downloading any new episodes, iTunes will simply add information about those episodes to your subscription listing.

After iTunes updates your podcast subscriptions, the new content will be snug and secure in your iTunes library and any info about shows that it didn't download will appear in the listing.

You also can also tell iTunes how to manage the shows you've downloaded. If you've subscribed to dozens or hundreds of podcasts, you can fill your hard drive pretty quickly. You can tell iTunes to delete every show from your hard drive as soon as you've heard it, or just hang on to the freshest couple of episodes. By default, I like to have iTunes keep every show that gets downloaded because I enjoy listening to my favorites again months later.

SYNCING PODCASTS TO YOUR IPHONE

Normally, you'd use the standard iPhone
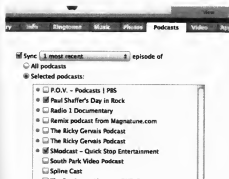
Figure 12-16
Deciding how podcasts wind up on your iPod

preferences pane to choose which podcasts get synced to your device as in Figure 12-16.

By default, iTunes selects Automatically Update All Unplayed Podcasts for you. Every podcast that appears in iTunes will automatically be copied to your device, where they'll appear in its built-in Podcasts list.

Fabulous. This works peachy-keen if you have a modicum of self-control and don't subscribe to more podcasts than your poor little 4– (8–, 16–, 32–) gigabyte device can handle.

Otherwise, you're quickly going to run out of space on your iPhone or iPod Touch. Picture yourself there in the car, laughing merrily as the acres of bumper-to-bumper traffic. There is a song in your heart because a two-hour delay gives you all the time in the world to listen to a recent podcast you downloaded which features three hours with the creators of *The Matrix*, in which they admit that the first movie was sort of okay but then the final two were just self-indul-

gent, pretentious nonsense.

And then you discover that none of it got copied to your iPhone because everything you've downloaded over the past week has choked its capacity.

So clearly, it's a Good Thing to allow iTunes to be a bit more selective about the content that it sends to your iPhone. Automatically Update Selected Podcasts Only lets you point-and shoot a handful of podcasts that should always be automatically updated, leaving the rest behind. Click the checkboxes of those podcasts you just can't live without.

As for the Manually Manage Podcasts option, well, that's no fun, obviously. iTunes won't automatically copy shows to your iPhone or iPod Touch and will leave that task completely up to you.

Bummer.

Truth be told, though, that's what I've selected in *my* iTunes library. Those automatic features are terrific because they don't require you to do any heavy lifting, but you cede a lot of control. If you become even slightly adept at iTunes and how to manage playlists, you can easily set up iTunes to copy podcasts precisely the way you like 'em, by organizing them into smart playlists.

For example, Figure 12-17 shows a smart playlist I set up that ensures that the new-
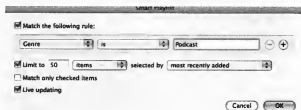
Figure 12-17
Taking greater control over iPod content with smart playlists

TIDBIT

Be sure to turn to Chapter 10 for one of my favorite iPhone/ iPod Touch tricks. Your device has a connection to the Internet, so it *should* be able to download new podcasts straight from the ether, right? Alas, Apple didn't wire that feature. But by bookmarking the podcast's RSS feed in Safari, you can have the latest episode streamed through your iPhone or iPod Touch, directly from the server. Chapter 10 has all the colorful language and pictures explaining how this works.

est podcasts land on my iPhone. The first line says, "This playlist should only contain podcasts." The second makes sure that the podcast will be removed from the playlist automatically after I've heard it, and replaced with fresh content.

The chief problem with the way the iPhone handles podcasts is that it assumes that you want to listen to a single 4-minute episode of KRCW's *Martini Shot* and then nothing more. Or that you want to listen to listen to every single unplayed episode of the *E Online* gossip Q&A podcast, one after the other. So if you let your iPhone's built-in Podcast menu handle your podcast playback, you're left with a long drive from Boston to Hartford that features either (a) 98 minutes of dead air, or (b) two hours of nothing but information about celebrities vomiting in socially awkward situations.

Either way, it's a situation that lends itself well to jerking the steering wheel and crash-

ing into a bridge abutment to end your pain once and for all. So let's see if we can't improve that.

But when your normal mechanism for listening to podcasts is this smart playlist, after you've heard the latest *Martini Shot*, the iPhone starts playing the newest *SmodCast* because it's the next item in the playlist. Hours and hours of uninterrupted music. That sounds like a pretty fair deal to me. For more information on building and using smart playlists, the Library of Congress (actually, just me) recommends Chapter 2 of this same book.

Podcasting is such a wonderful thing that it's utterly *astounding* that you humans haven't discovered a way to wreck it yet. A world full of free, rich content that lands on your iPhone as though delivered by pixies while the shoemaker slept. I've been at this since there were less than 500 podcasts in the world, and I'm still amazed at the content.

Hey, here's a tip: search for Magnatune in the iTunes podcast directory. It's a music publisher with a freaky way of doing business. It hosts dozens and dozens of regular podcast featuring recordings from its library. An hour of Mozart, every week. Or Bach. Or jazz. Or Xanthanian typewriter-swallowing music. No ads, no cuts, no commercials; it's like a radio station.

The idea is that if you like some of the music in the podcast, maybe you'll visit Magnatune.com and buy some of it on CD. I should, um, probably do that sometime.

It's also slightly remarkable that Apple is the one maker of portable devices that supports podcasting so aggressively. Just think for a moment: Apple makes jillions of dollars a year by selling people content through the iTunes Store. And yet it uses that same

entity's massive resources to connect its customers to hundreds of thousands of hours of free content. Go figure.

Well, I'm certain you'll find a way to ruin this entire concept. I had a favorite brand of cookie I wondered just *how* this perfection of delectability could possibly be ruined. But you people came through for me: The company replaced the high-quality chocolate with stuff that was mostly paraffin, and dumped so many preservatives into the recipe that they never were quite crisp again.

And some people have no faith in humanity. Pish-tosh! Put your shoulders into it, Mr. and Mrs. Humanity, and I'm absolutely certain that within one generation, podcasts can be worthless and intractable junk of absolutely no value or interest to anybody.

13

Downloading Music from Places Other than iTunes

The Skim

Apple is famous for end-to-end solutions. And that sounds a little bit naughty but it really means that by creating a world in which you sit down at your Apple computer and launch an app the Apple created for managing music and connect to Apple's online music store and syncing the music you've bought to your Apple portable music player. Well, then Apple has a big opportunity to make sure that nothing goes wrong at any step along the way.

They also have an opportunity to dissuade you from giving any other computer, software, or music company a shot at your cash.

So, yeah, I guess it really *is* just a little bit naughty.

The iTunes Store is actually quite a marvel. I've always held that I'd rather live under a dictator who anticipates and satisfies my every need than live in Freedom, if freedom entails that all I have are 10 earthworms for dinner and a further 90 that I'm fattening up for market so that maybe I can come home with four beans to feed the favorite of my nine children.

But Apple is hardly your sole source of online music. There are plenty of ways to get your hands on free music that are in fact perfectly legal. In recent months, two large online music retailers have discovered a way to sell music to iPhone and iPod users that goes iTunes one better.

DOWNLOADING MUSIC FOR FREE

You're not a cop, are you?

Seriously, dude could you lift up your shirt or something so I can see if you're wearing a wire? Because if y'are, I wanna say that I have no intention of illegally trafficking in pirated music, and if there's any evidence or anything that I did, then it was entrapment and stuff.

No, no, I hope I didn't offend ya or nothin'. But I had to ask. We've been gettin' hassled a lot, y'know. Can't be too careful. Particularly *now*. Because The Man's been coming down hard on downloading unprotected music off the Internet. And I've got this *awesome* plan that lets us all download truckloads of music every day and there ain't a *thing* that the recording industry or the feds can do about it.

The secret — you gotta swear you won't tell nobody else — is this: *You make sure you don't do anything that's actually illegal.*

Yeah, I know. I was pretty proud of that scheme myself, after I shook the final few bugs out of it. You should have seen the look on the dude from the Recording Industry Association of America's face after he confronted me on my doorstep with network logs proving that I'd downloaded hundreds of megabytes of MP3s, all triumphant-like, and then learned that I'd done so completely legally, with the encouragement and permission of the files' original copyright holders.

Mind you, he still sucker-punched me in a delicate area and then poured the rest of his take-out coffee on me as I writhed in pain on my own porch, before he stormed off to his car and backed over my novelty mailbox. But let's be clear: The moral and legal victory was absolute.

WHY STEALING MUSIC IS, YOU KNOW, BAD

Lots of people make fun of the recording industry's copyright watchdogs, and for good reason: Their excesses are, well, so *excessive*. I suppose you could praise them for having an unusual dedication and determination to see their tasks through to the end, even when it's been demonstrably proven that the person that they're prosecuting into bankruptcy is an octogenarian retiree who doesn't even own a computer. You could also suggest that they're a separate branch of the evolutionary tree and have seven webbed toes on each foot.

But that wouldn't change the fact that piracy is wrong. You want it? It's a commercial product? Then you gotta pay for it. Period.

And if the moral angle doesn't work for you, do keep in mind that at this stage in the game, detecting illegal music downloads is a fairly automated process. Rest assured that the recording industry's copyright goons became aware of that illegal file-sharing site well before you did.

Also be aware that even if you never provided a name and address, your computer left behind a sequence of digits that can rewind the download all the way back to your house, and that the aforementioned goons can exchange these digits for a name and address with one e-mail to your Internet service provider.

Figure 13-1
Beats for deadbeats: free music from the iTunes Store

So it's wrong and it's dangerous.

And most music sucks, anyway. Do you really want to risk a $3,000 fine over a song from a band that, twenty years from now, you're going to swear to your kids that you never even liked or listened to?

FREE FROM COMMERCIAL SITES

Yes indeed, it's possible to (a) download music, (b) copyrighted music, by name-brand artists, (c) not pay a dime for it, and most bizarre of all, (d) right into the hands of the recording industry.

It's all down to merchandising, promotion, and the desire to Go Viral. Record companies regularly seed the major commercial music stores with tracks that you can download for free. The most reliable ones:

iTunes Music Store

I know that the basic theme of this chapter is downloading music free of the corporate chains of the Apple iTunes golmothra. But I must remind you that a new smattering of free tracks arrives on iTunes every week. And naturally, the iTunes Store is your first and simplest click. The store's front door always contains a few links to free downloads. Usually you'll find these links at the bottom of the page, as in Figure 13-1.

And it's not just music; *everything* free is collected on that page. Music, videos, books, the whole whack. Naturally, you won't exactly be spending hours and hours poring through the cornucopia of free selections; usually there are only a handful of freebies available at any given time, and they're only available for a limited time. But iTunes shoppers are such a huge and important part of the music market that music publishers are often willing to give away tracks by chart-topping acts instead of the factory-floor sweepings you'd expect to see.

You do indeed have to look to find these freebies, but if you're not interested in scouring the Store yourself, you can just bookmark the Free iTunes Store Downloads blog (itsfreedownloads.com). This regularly updated blog maintains a list of not just the free music downloads but also free audiobooks and videos. Best of all, you can subscribe to its RSS feed in your Web browser or newsreader and automatically be notified of new freebies.

Amazon MP3 Store

But if Apple is occasionally willing to let you have a morsel or two of free music, well Amazon.com is the ice cream truck that got stuck under the low bridge near your house, and they're urging you to help yourself to as much as you can stomach before it all starts to melt.

The top page of Amazon.com's MP3 music store usually stashes information about fresh, popular, and recommended free tracks in the right-hand column. But this link will simply return a list of all the free tracks:

```
http://www.amazon.com/s/
node=334897011&sort=salesrank
```

Showing 1 - 50 of 1,615 Results   « Previous | **Page:** 1 2 3 | Next »   Sort by [Bestselling]

	Song Title	Artist	Album	Time	Price	Download
▶	1. Energy	The Apples In Stereo	New Magnetic Wonder	3:30	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	2. Murder in the City	The Avett Brothers	Murder in the City	3:12	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	3. Lying In The Sun	Koushik	Out My Window	3:38	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	4. Make Me (Album)	Heart	Make Me	3:58	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	5. Cool Places	Sparks	In Outer Space	3:25	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	6. Gillian Was A Horse	Damien Jurado	Gillian Was A Horse	3:20	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	7. Toll Free	Plastilina Mosh	All U Need Is Mosh	3:21	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	8. GfC	Albert Hammond Jr.	GfC	3:13	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	9. Criminal	Justin Nozuka	Criminal	4:06	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	10. Talkin' To You Eye To Eye	Roomful Of Blues	Raisin' A Ruckus	3:03	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	11. Mr. Bassman (and Piano Girl)	Laurie Berkner	Rocketship Run	2:33	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	12. The One For Me	Rahsaan Patterson	After Hours	3:26	FREE!	Get MP3
▶	13. In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening	Frankie Laine And Friends	20 Great Tracks	2:39	FREE!	Get MP3

Figure 13-2
Amazon has, um, wow, a *lot* of free music.

This URL will spit out the delightful results seen in Figure 13-2.

I call your attention to two elements that sort of leap out at you: the preponderance of the word "Free!" in the Price column, and the bit at the top reporting that this specialized search for just free music returned 1,615 results.

I should also call your attention to the fact that I've actually *heard* of many of these bands and am happy to add their work to my iTunes library.

Don't worry that this isn't the iTunes Store; just click the Get MP3 link and they'll land in iTunes. I'll explain that in a little more detail later in the chapter.

FREEBIES FROM AN ONLINE LIBRARY

The Internet Archive (archive.org) is no

mere repository of audio files but is a non-profit member of the American Library Association. The Internet Archive has taken on the goal of protecting and *preserving* content and making it available to current and future generations.

It's an ambitious agenda. Archive.org will show you Web pages stretching back to the very start of the World Wide Web. Classic books and essays are available as electronic texts. Movies, television shows, old software and yes, music, all from artists who support Archive.org's cause. (see Figure 13-3).

You might think that this audio archive contains, I dunno, public-domain jug-band music transferred off wax Edison cylinders. You would be correct. But it also contains modern tunes, speeches, conferences, and the largest and best-indexed collection of legal concert recordings available anywhere

Audio Archive > Live Music Archive

Figure 13-3
Archive.org: free music with a higher calling

including many from major, currently touring groups. With tens of thousands of music files available, it's easy to fill an iPhone to the brim from Archive.org alone. And that doesn't even touch on its archives of freely downloadable video and other content.

FINDING FREE MUSIC

O'course, the sites I've mentioned aren't the only spots where you can find free music. Ninety-nine percent of the others fall into a few predictable categories:

- ○ They offer free music, but you can't actually download any of it. It's like a radio station where you can be your own DJ. Which is fine if you're trying to kill some time at work, but not so good

if you want to fill an iPhone.

- ○ They offer free music, but chiefly as a way to sneak spyware, adware, keystroke loggers, and other nasty Trojan horses onto your system. Which is why you should be careful about Googling for "free music downloads." It's up there with "free ringtones," "free wallpaper," and "Do you share a credit-card or Social Security number with a famous celebrity," "Take our free online quiz and find out!" — something of a Red Flag Word for fraud.

- ○ They offer free, downloadable music, no fooling, but it's just a few specific bands. Which is terrific from my point of view as I have hundreds of pages to

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Figure 13-4
Dogpile searches for music. But the files it finds arrive covered in spit ...

of a genre or a specific band, it'll bring back the goods (see Figure 13-4).

Freebies from Music Blogs

The Web is obviously a powerful tool for a band that wants to promote itself and its music.

And thousands of lower-tier bands offer their MP3s on their personal sites as an enticement to maybe drive thirty miles to a hole-in-the-wall venue just outside of Pittsburgh and pay a $5 cover charge to see 'em play live. But how to *find* these sites?

Welp, you can try a straight-up Google search for the sort of music you like ("Bluegrass MP3 download") and keep clicking until you get lucky. Or, you could subscribe to any of (let me check) yes, 183,277 music-oriented blogs.

Or, you could visit one blog that keeps tabs on all of the music being linked from all the *other* music blogs. The (hypem.com) is a Web log (a.k.a. blog) that follows music blogs. It pops out and links to any free new music files that are getting talked about (see Figure 13-5).

Results can be a bit scattershot. Hype Machine gives you the firehose treatment, as

fill here, but what help would that be to you, the consumer?

No, instead I must press on and talk about ways to locate free music through search engines.

Basic Search

Tech companies have long-since given up competing with Google and instead hope to find some sort of niche in which they can carve out some sort of success. Google doesn't (at this writing) have a simple "search for audio files" feature. Okay, cool! Then that's the feature they'll add to their search engines.

This looks like a job for Dogpile.com. Dogpile's own niche is to be the search engine that searches *other* search engines, and combines all their results into one list. So if you just click on Dogpile's Audio tab and type in the name

opposed to giving you a nice friendly click-able button marked "Music you'd be likely to show half an interest in." But the side-benefit is that it doesn't take long before you've bookmarked a bunch of music sites that to your delight, regularly feature the music that the parents of today and the kids of tomorrow can't abide.

Googling for Tunes

Eventually, it comes down to rummaging through dumpsters and trash cans for scraps of entertainment.

At least that's what it feels like when you start using Google to search music files. It's a hopelessly random tool for this sort of thing. It works a treat if you click on the search box armed with the name of a fantastic band that you heard playing in Harvard Square on your way to buy comic books, but a search for "music I'm not already sick and tired of" doesn't return the results that it ought to.

You *know* the instant I typed "music I'm not already sick and tired of" I had to click over to Google to see what would come up if I actually performed that search. See Figure 13-6. Google is the world's authority on search, so I guess this means the problem is with my attitude or something. Duly noted.

Google *could* become a monster tool for finding and downloading free music. As of this writing, they don't appear to be interested in giving us that sort of tool. Google does have a Music Search feature, but all it means is that if you do a stan-

dard search for "Janis Joplin" it'll begin its list of search results with a list of albums and music services where you can purchase them.

The next best thing is to exploit one of Google's advanced search features. I'll cut

Figure 13-5
Hype Machine: all the music in the blogosphere, at a glance

Figure 13-6
Searching for music I'm not already sick of via Google's usual interface doesn't work very well.

to the chase and give you a sample Google search string:

```
awesome bluegrass link:*.mp3
```

"Awesome" and "bluegrass" are straightforward search terms; please find me some bluegrass, and I only want stuff that's Awesome.

The meat of the string is at the end: "link" means "return Web pages that link to the following Web address." Any downloadable MP3 file will have a Web address that ends in the .mp3 filename extension. Natcherly, we can't possibly know what that address will be, but Google will interpret the asterisk (*) as a wildcard.

In total, the search string means "Find me Web pages that contain the words 'awesome'

TROUBLE

Do keep in mind that the Delicious.com MP3 bookmarks are unmarshalled, unpoliced bookmarks. So it's possible that you'll find links to illegal downloads. And remember: Downloading music illegally is just plain wrong, and can result in some serious consequences.

and 'bluegrass,' and that contain at least one link to an .mp3 file." Plug this into Google and it's all over but the endless wading through dozens and dozens of pages of results.

Delicious Music

There's a similar trick that uses Delicious, the (hypermegasuper-awesome) community-based Web directory. Delicious.com — yes, that's what used to be the URL del.icio.us — is a valuable tool for navigating the Web. Its users can "publish" bookmarks to the del.icio.us Web site, tagged with keywords that make it simple to find pages that fit certain categories. Search Google for "poker tips" and Google will return every Web page everywhere which contains those two words.

But if you search del.icio.us with those words, it only returns Web pages that Delicious's legions of users have personally tagged with those two descriptive words, and (hooray) were considered valuable enough to actually bookmark. So nearly every page it returns is pure Tabasco.

You can indeed search for "free music" and get lots of productive hits. But Delicious (unlike Google) will search specifically for music files if you know how to ask. Bookmark this URL:

```
http://delicious.com/tag/
system:filetype:mp3
```

The result is a list of recently bookmarked MP3 files that Delicious's users have located and saved all over the Web (see Figure 13-7).

THE AMAZON MP3 STORE (AGAIN)

iTunes has indeed become the Google of online music stores. It's impossible for any

Figure 13-7
Delicious MP3 bookmarks: like *American Idol* voting, only not quite so dippy

business to compete with it head-on. The only way you can sell digital music online and really make a go of it is to serve the needs that Apple is unwilling or unable to address.

It also helps that Apple is so big and powerful that the record companies are desperate to weaken iTunes somehow, *anyhow*.

Enter Amazon.com and the Amazon MP3 Store. To get this fore sort it's feet and running (and chasing after iTunes with a two-by-four), the record companies made deals with Amazon that allowed the service to sell *all* its digital music as unlocked, plain MP3 files with no digital rights management (DRM) of any kind attached. You buy the track, it arrives as an MP3 file.

Purchasing music is no tougher than purchasing anything else on Amazon: just click a button next to the track or the album. It's charged to the credit card attached to your Amazon account and automatically

downloaded to your hard drive. If this is the first time you've purchased an Amazon MP3, it'll also prompt you to install a free "helper" program that will automatically add the downloaded track to your iTunes library.

But of course, the MP3 you've bought isn't limited to iTunes or an iPhone.

You can sync it to your iPhone. Your iPod. The ebook reader device that also plays music. The little $15 music player you bought your ten-year-old. Anything. The typical iTunes Store track can *only* be played with Apple hardware and software.

And the typical iTunes track is encoded at just *half* the sound quality of an Amazon MP3 track. All at about 99 cents a track, the same as iTunes.

Steve Jobs responded to complaints about the limitations of DRM via a Personal Letter (posted quite intimately on the front page of apple.com) explaining that yes, even *he* doesn't like DRM but that's the way things would have to be, until the record companies allowed iTunes to sell unlocked music. iTunes has made a good start; many tracks are available as iTunes Plus downloads: no DRM, high bit rate. But that's still the exception rather than the rule.

No, every track on Amazon arrives on your hard drive as naked as the day it was whelped.

Good heavens. So why *wouldn't* you just switch from the iTunes Store to the Amazon

MP3 store and be done with it? Well…

○ *The browsing experience stinks.* Why is the iTunes Store so good at separating me from my money? Because it's easy to just browse. I hear a song in a TV commercial and I intend to buy just that one song. But there are links to iTunes pages that explain more about the artist. And there's a list of other music that was purchased by the same people who bought this track. And there's a huge list of recommended tracks that are similar in theme or genre. And…

○ But Amazon has merely tweaked the store software they use to sell camera batteries and Danielle Steele novels. It's easy to get what you came for, but not so easy to buy something that you never knew existed, if you follow me.

○ *No "Complete My Album" or similar features.* And that's one of the great bits of the iTunes Store. You buy one track, and listen to it so frequently that you buy a couple more over the next week. Ultimately you think "Heck with it I'll take the whole album." But on Amazon, you'll have to buy each track separately. There are a bunch of "missing" features like this.

Still, that feels like nitpicking. I didn't even mention that tracks and albums are often cheaper from Amazon than from Apple. Once again, the record companies want to put as many arrows in Amazon's quiver as they can.

But the browsing experience is still a big loser.

Hmm.

Okay, I'm not proud of this, but I'm here to serve you:

I use the iTunes Store to *find* the music

I want. And once I've decided that I really do want a copy of The Asylum Street Spankers' "Since I Met You Baby," I tab over to my Web browser and buy it from Amazon.

It's cheaper and it's an MP3. My allegiance is to the freedom of DRM-free music and the buying power of that extra dime, not to Apple.

Sorry, Steve. I still love you.

(Just not in That Way.)

⚅⬛🖥🔲

14

Audio Streams

The Skim

Capturing Audio to a File ▶
Capturing Specific Shows and Stations Automatically ▶
Hail, Pandora!

Eww! Look at the *mess* that you're making!

There you are, blithely listening to audio on your computer. Are you giving any thought to what's happening to all that audio dribbling through the speakers and your headphones? That's right: it's just making a big sticky puddle on the floor.

You should *catch* that stuff. In a bucket, maybe. It's useful stuff ... you really shouldn't just let it spill down the drain like that.

Yes, there are utilities that can capture all the sound that your computer is generating and send it to an audio file. It's like holding a microphone up to the speaker, only less wire-y.

These apps can also automatically launch specific audio programs and thus act as a sort of "audio VCR," tuning in to your favorite overseas football broadcast via streaming radio, and have it ready for your iPhone by the time you wake up in the morning.

Finally, since we're talking about streaming radio, we might as well talk about two rather super-awesome apps and services for the iPhone and iPod Touch that bring live radio to your device, no matter where you are.

Bad craziness lies ahead.

CAPTURING AUDIO TO A FILE

There are utilities for the PC and Mac that can capture your computer's audio to a file.

The function of these utilities is so basic and fundamental that I need to break them out and let them stand all by themselves in their glory:

They can capture any audio playing through your PC to a file that you can import into iTunes and put on an iPhone.

Well, that's game, set, and match, isn't it? It's a solution to any and all permutations of the question "How do I get this audio onto my iPhone?" Examples:

⊙ The BBC streams enough incredibly great content that the sheer awesomeness of it all can affect the tides and confuse migrating birds. But there's no Record button on the Real Audio player that plays the actual content. So once

you've heard the BBC Radio Drama version of *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, it's gone for good.

Solution: Record it as you listen to it.

⊙ You've bought oodles of dollars' worth of music from the iTunes Store or some other commercial music site that locks up your purchased tracks in proprietary digital rights management. You can't take your iTunes Store music and play it on your Zune (pause to spit on the floor) or through a non-Apple home media server. You can't take the tracks you impulsively purchased on Wal-Mart's music store and get 'em to work on an iPhone.

Solution: Play the tracks in iTunes and capture them to plain, unprotected MP3 files in full stereo.

⊙ Through the magic of audio chat, you and four or five people are having an

TIDBIT

As a guy who creates stuff for a living, I ought to acknowledge a question:

Is it *right* to capture audio to a file? Shouldn't we consider the possibility that the creators of a radio show don't podcast their show because they don't *want* people listening on their iPods and iPhones and stuff?

I gotta admit that I don't have an aggressive and arrogant answer to that one. It's certainly wrong to use this software to steal a copy of locked, purchased music that you don't own, for example, but when the audio is on a DVD that you bought?

Using an audio-capture utility is almost *righteous.*

Unfortunately, most examples fall in the middle. I suppose it comes down to the advice your parents gave you (if they were good parents, I mean): Would you feel awkward justifying your actions to someone?

I continue to record BBC programming because it's free, and they publish the URLs to their streams openly, and (unlike many radio sites) they don't even use Web ads to subsidize the broadcasts.

But your mileage will vary. Please — I say, sincerely — don't be naughty. One day you're going to wonder why nobody creates any *decent* content any more and the answer is because nobody could make any money doing it.

online meeting. You'd like to, you know, *record* all this so that when inevitably the whole project fails and takes the whole company down with it, you can have a swift and conclusive rebuttal to the charge that it was *you* who suggested a buddy-cop movie starring the grown-up cute kid from *The Sixth Sense* and a wise-cracking cartoon motor scooter voiced by Jimmy Fallon.

Solution: Capture the output of your chat program to a file, just for safekeeping.

○ You think that Hunter S. Thompson's stream-of-consciousness rantings in one of the commentary tracks to the *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* DVD is just the thing to motivate you through your morning run. But you're not terribly interested in ripping the movie with one piece of software and then using a second piece of software to strip the audio portion into a separate file.

You get the idea.

On and on. You put the tool on your hard drive … and then just wait. You can be certain that eventually, it's going to be the solution to *some* sort of problem.

Using these capture utilities is barely more difficult than pushing the Record button on a VCR. (You kids remember what VCRs were, right?)

Capturing Audio with Windows: Replay AV

Applian Technologies' Replay AV (applian. com) is an absolute marvel. It's an awesomely sophisticated but simple app whose purpose is to take your computer's audio and stick it in amber for all time.

"Snag whatever's coming out the speak-
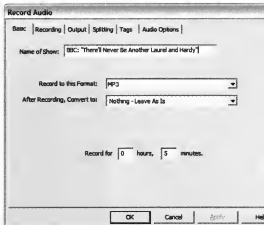
Figure 14-1
Replay AV at its most basic: preparing to capture audio

Figure 14-2
Recording a show manually in Replay AV

ers to a file" is barely worth its time. We'll see it stretch its legs later in the chapter. But for now, let's say you've inserted your DVD of *My Dinner with André* into the drive or you've pointed your browser at your favorite streaming radio station or … well, you would know better than I what you're going to want to record. It's a snap:

1. Launch Replay AV. The main window is shown in Figure 14-2 but for the moment, please go to the Record menu and select Record Audio from Speak-

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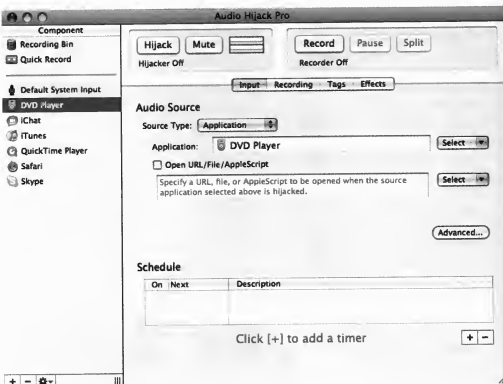
Figure 14-3
Audio Hijack Pro for Macs

ers. You'll see the simple panel shown in Figure 14-1. The default settings should be just fine: MP3, don't have Replay do anything funny to the file afterwards.

2. Give your recording a name. Then select a recording time if you want the recording to stop automatically after a certain decent interval. Click OK when all is as you like it. Replay AV will begin capturing audio from your PC's audio circuitry. The app's main window will look like Figure 14-2.

3. Start the audio in the app of your choice. Remember, Replay started going the moment you clicked OK.

4. When you want to terminate record-

ing, click on the program in the Replay AV window to reveal its pop-up menu and select Stop Record/Download. This is unnecessary, of course, if you told the app to just stop automatically after recording for a specific duration.

5. Go back to the recording's listing and select View Shows to go to the folder where the recording was saved. There it is, a plain MP3 ready to import into iTunes.

Capturing Audio on a Mac: Audio Hijack Pro

The corresponding Mac app — Audio Hijack Pro — is a lot prettier than Replay

(but don't judge the Windows app just yet, please). And at the *basic* task of capturing live audio from your computer, it has a couple of fresh tricks. Replay AV just holds a virtual microphone up to the PC's speaker; *every* bit of audio gets captured in one stream. Which is why 20 minutes into your capture of a conference call, the sounds of World War II air combat fills the audio picture.

Yes, this was the moment you got bored and started playing a game while half-listening to your boss.

Audio Hijack Pro from (yes, this is indeed the name of the company) Rogue Amoeba ($32; rogueamoeba.com) is more selective. When you launch the app, it immediately presents a list of every app it sees which can generate noise (see Figure 14-3).

So you can be very selective in what you mean to capture. Let's convert the audio from my *Raiders of the Lost Ark* DVD to an MP3:

1. Select DVD Player from the list of apps, and click the Hijack button. This tells Hijack to capture the audio generated by only this app. As with Replay AV, the default recording settings are perfectly fine. But you can click on the Recording tab of the window to select a file format and choose a duration for the recording. Hijack is now in standby mode.

2. Click the Record button to start the recording.

3. Switch over to DVD Player and start the disc playing. When the movie is over, return to Audio Hijack.

4. Click the Hijack button again to turn off the recording.

The audio file can be found inside your Music folder, in the Audio Hijack subfolder. As promised, none of the cheerful "New mail!"

> ### TIDBIT
>
> Audio Hijack is a remarkably slick app. I'm just scratching the surface. You can have it automatically open up streaming audio URLs on certain days and times, so that you always catch the news on your local news radio station. You can have it pass control to a script or another app once you're finished, so that whatever you record lands on your Web site without a single extra step. Et cetera, et cetera.
>
> But there are other wonderful apps for making automatic recordings. So trust me when I say that Hijack is worth it.
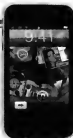
CAPTURING SPECIFIC SHOWS AND STATIONS AUTOMATICALLY

These manually operated apps work great. But there are other features and programs that can record streaming Internet audio in just one or two steps. It's not a case of knowing which, what, where, and when a show airs; just tell the app that you want this show recorded, and the app works out all the details on its own.

Windows: Back to Replay AV

Boy, I love this app. Have I told you that I love this app? Well, I do. It sells for $49 but I've recommended other Applian products elsewhere in the book — the company also makes a *sweet* app for capturing even tightly locked-down commercial Internet videos — so I think you ought to spend $99 for the

full Replay Capture Suite.

Here's what I mean. The BBC is airing a radio drama based on Douglas Adams's *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency.* I can, um, figure out what time it airs, and what BBC Radio streaming channel it's on and what day and what time. And what time that would be here in Boston. Then stay up and hijack the recording. And remember to do that every time every new episode of the show airs.

But why would I do that? I have Replay AV!

1. Click the Open Recording Wizard button in the main Replay AV window. A simplified list of functions appears (see Figure 14-4).

2. Click on Browse the Media Guide. Replay gets in touch with Applian's media servers and opens the home page of their extensive guide to
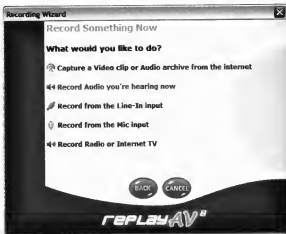
Figure 14-4
The many modes and moods of Replay AV
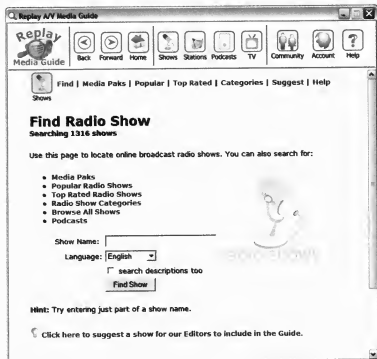
Figure 14-5
Search the world's airwaves in one page in Replay AV

Category: Talk · Books
Category: Talk · Comedy

Dirk Gently has an unshakeable belief in the i
Holistic Detective Agency's only success see
old ladies. Then Dirk stumbles upon an old fri
into a four-billion year old mystery that musi
immediate extinction.

Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency pl

 BBC Radio 4

Wednesday
9:30 PM - 10:00 PM Local Time

Figure 14-6
Ask and ye shall receive: the program
page in Replay AV

> **TIDBIT**
>
> Better to risk stating the
> obvious than confuse y'all:
> Replay AV can't record any
> of your scheduled programs
> unless it's running. It also
> can't add new recordings to
> iTunes unless *that's* running as well. So
> make sure that both apps are launched
> and ready at all times.
>
> This also means that your *PC* will have
> to be up and running at the appointed
> hour. Head on over to the Start menu
> and click Start ▶ Control Panel ▶ Per-
> formance and Maintenance ▶ Power
> Options, and set up Windows so that
> the system never hibernates. You can
> tell Windows to turn off the monitor
> and the hard drive, though.

Everything That Happens Via Stream-
ing Audio.

3. Click the Shows button and a search
   page opens (see Figure 14-5).
4. Type in details about a show you want
   to find. In this case, I'm looking for a
   specific program so I type in the title.
5. Click Find Show. Well, whaddya know
   ... it found it right away (see Figure
   14-6).
6. Click the Add button and Replay AV
   does the rest. The app knows what it
   needs to do and when it needs to do it.

That's it. Replay adds the show and all its
upcoming episodes to its recording schedule.
Every time a new episode airs, Replay will
record it.

And you can search for all kinds of things.
Search for topics, search for locations, search
for radio stations. The Replay guide is
extremely thorough.

Macintosh: RadioShift

I wish there were a Mac app that was
quite as meaty as Replay AV. RadioShift —
another great app by Rogue Amoeba, a name

that I repeat I am not making up — isn't as
powerful, but it feeds from the same trough
and is a lot prettier.

Once again, I want to record a show off
BBC Radio 4. But this time, I'm not think-
ing of a specific show. I'm just browsing for
content in a specific channel. Figure 14-7
shows RadioShift's leadoff search page.

1. Type in a search term. I searched for
   "BBC Radio 4" and the app quickly
   found the station's details.
2. Click on the name of the station. A
   program guide for BBC 4 appears (see
   Figure 14-8).
3. Radio 4 Comedy sounds good. Click
   on the show listing and then click the
   Subscribe button. There's one final
   little detail page, but once you click

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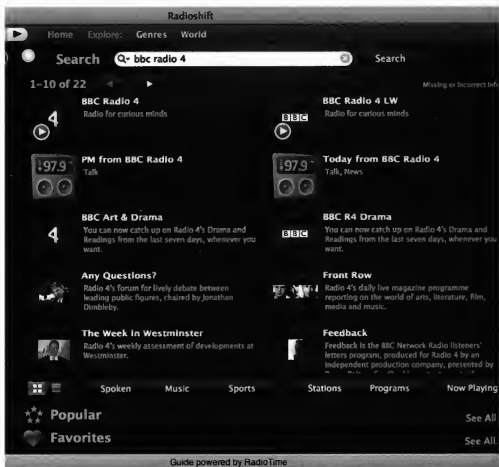
Figure 14-7
Searching for shows via RadioShift

the Save button, a new subscription is added to the app's to-do list. Every evening at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Radio-Shift will tap into the BBC's stream and capture the audio to a file, which will be stashed inside a RadioShift folder inside the Music directory.

It's another "set it and forget it" solution. Recording this material on schedule becomes the app's problem, not mine. I can listen to

my library of recordings directly in Radio-Shift, and send selected episodes to iTunes so that they can be synced to my iPhone.

RadioShift is a lovely app. You can search for specific things, but you can also browse, browse, browse. By topic, by region, by category. You can even call up a map of the world; cities with streaming radio are marked with a green dot (see Figure 14-9). I don't know what they listen to in Reykjavik, but

Figure 14-8
Scanning through the entire program guide for a specific channel in RadioShift

---

I sure intend to find out.

The Mac and PC apps go at the same problem from slightly different angles, but the end result is equally terrific: Wonderful programming from all over your hard drive just magically arrives on your hard drive on a daily basis. And it's all free, free, free.

HAIL, PANDORA!

I'll never get tired of saying this: The

iPhone 3G was only Apple's second-best iPhone release in 2008. By far, the most important thing Apple did was open up the App Store. In one day, the iPhone and iPod Touch changed from devices that did a limited range of things extremely well to devices that could do damned-near anything at all.

And one of the true transformative software categories is the huge collection of iPhone apps that stream live audio from

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Figure 14-9
Scanning the globe for awesome audio in RadioShift

Internet radio sites. You think it's a neat trick to have 16 gigabytes of music? How about having millions of songs? And you never need to sync, and you never need to pay.

I'd wear my poor little fingers to nubs trying to describe all the streaming audio apps. Chiefly, if you have a radio station, a network, or an Internet music service, you're keen to release a free app that lets users access that streams through the iPhone. As yet, there's no One Tuner to Rule Them All.

So instead, I'll champion my favorite such app. I don't think I could get through my day without Pandora.

Pandora represents a powerful new perspective on radio. It's an almost perfect melding of the "I am a deejay" mentality of an iPod/iPhone owner who mixes his own playlist and the "I'm not made of money"

sensibility of someone who loves music but who can't pay for hours and hours and hours of tracks at a buck a throw.

So Pandora is a compromise. Give Pandora the name of a band that you like. It'll use music from that band as a starting point and draw upon a sophisticated database to choose music that "fits" alongside.

You don't assemble playlists. You create personal "radio stations." You start by installing the free Pandora iPhone app and creating a free user account at pandora.com

You can create, manage, and listen to Pandora stations via any Web browser, but let's keep this an iPhone party, eh? Figure 14-10 shows the first step: Tap the New Station button and Pandora asks for a starting point.

Type the name of a band. I'm starting with the Dead Milkmen ... well, whaddya know: Pandora knows about that band and guesses the name after just a few characters. Click, and it creates the station and starts playing a Dead Milkmen tune!

An invisible deejay who knows about every band that ever got a record deal starts playing music. The next song won't be a Dead Milkmen tune; it'll be from a band that Pandora considers to be similar.

Uh-uh ... the next song is from Black Flag. I don't like that song. So I tell the deejay by tapping the Thumbs Down button and then tap the Next Track button. By voting thumbs up and thumbs down, the deejay gets a better handle on the sort of mood that comes to mind when I think "Dead Milkmen Radio."

Huh? It's playing a Johnny Cash song now? I wonder why?

I needn't live in mystery. I tap and receive an explanation (see Figure 14-12).

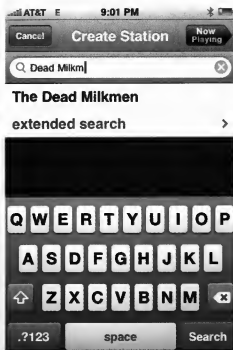Huh. Well, I gotta admit, I wouldn't have thought to add that track but dangit, it really

Figure 14-10
Building a new Pandora radio station

Figure 14-11
Milkmen Radio: The cream rises.

does fit in.

And it's a good tune. I want to remember it for later. So I tap the pop-up button (the up arrow) and see a list of options (see Figure 14-13). I can actually buy it immediately via iTunes! Tap, and it's mine.

If I don't have 99 cents to my name, I can just bookmark it so that later on, when I'm at a Web browser logged in to Pandora.com, I can pull up a list of all the great discoveries.

I'm quite addicted to Pandora. Obviously, the more you use it and the more songs you rate, the better Pandora gets at picking songs that you've never heard before but you instantly love.

With Pandora, you're like Howard Hughes. You own the radio station and if the

deejay wants to keep his job, he'll focus on making the boss happy.

Last.fm and AOL Radio are two more great music services supported by free iPhone apps. But Pandora is the one I shall forsake all others for.

So do you see what I mean? All those electrons shouldn't just slop out of your desktop speakers and spill onto the carpet. They work there way deep into the pile. Silverfish feed on them. Then they become *super*silverfish who are no longer intimidated by humans.

Keep the insects *down*, my fellow humans.

Above and beyond protecting our species from insectoid overlords, capturing audio is just too good a bargain to pass up. People wonder how radio can survive in an iPod era.
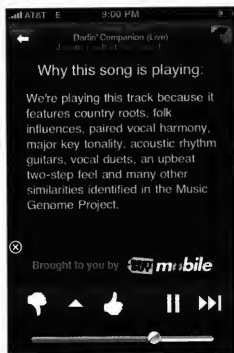
Figure 14-12
Why, 23 songs in, did the DJ add a Johnny Cash song to the mix?
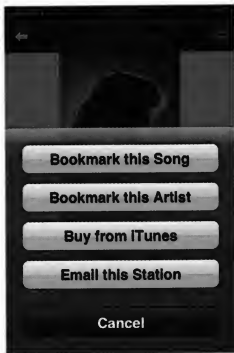
Figure 14-13
When a song is good enough to hold on to

Well, *this* is how radio survives. It delivers the product that radio does best — hours of fresh and often insightful content each and every day — and it delivers it through a medium that lets us enjoy the programming on our own terms.

As for Pandora … you'll get hooked. Just give in and don't fight it. If you're lucky, the money you save by having 90 percent of your music needs sated by free, streaming music will help cover the cost of all the tracks you buy from bands you'd never heard of, but instantly fell in love with once Pandora tossed them into the mix.

⚙🔋📶🔌

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Internet Videos

The Skim

Q: What did we ever do before the emergence of YouTube and other Internet video sites?

A: Actual work. We did *actual work*.

Honestly. Like you had to ask. Look at the mighty Boulder Dam, one of the most incredible engineering projects in human history. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, a tune described as "one of the highest achievements of Man," so powerful that it served as the hopeful anthem to the closure of an international conflict that claimed tens of millions of lives. Or the Great Pyramid at Giza, whose monumental form and seething mysteries has endured through five millennia.

Ask yourself: "Do you think the people who accomplished these great deeds spent *any* amount of time watching some kid from Encino attempt to play the Super Mario theme using the 12-foot electric arcs thrown off by an enormous Van de Graaff generator?"

Yes, I'm just as depressed as you are. But strength comes from knowledge.

Welp, we're stuck with this sad state of affairs. The *good* news is that the utter collapse of all civilization, though inevitable, won't really start becoming a nuisance until our as-yet-unborn grandchildren turn 40. So for now, we can download some of the better videos and enjoy them on
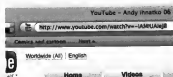
Figure 15-1
The URL to the video you're currently looking at
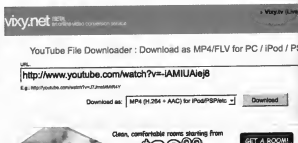
Figure 15-2
Converting videos online, via Vixy

our iPhone and iPod Touch.

Ah. But the trouble is that very few of these sites allow you to simply download videos. Google Video has a straightforward Download for iPod/iPhone button, but it's not available for all videos and, really, that site isn't the Big Name of video downloads, is it?

I have three favorite ways of transmogrifying online videos from YouTube and other sites. Three? Yes, because sometimes "simple" and "successful" aren't the same.

All methods start at the same place: a piece of online video excellence that celebrates the human creative spirit in all its glory. And its absolutely *not* just another dopey but adorable video of a puppy trying to work his head free of a cantaloupe rind.

Start off by copying the video's URL from your browser window's address bar (see Figure 15-1) and we're off and running.

DEAD BLOODY SIMPLE: VIXY

Vixy (vixy.net) is the sort of Web service that makes you instantly suspicious of the company's motives. It does something awesome and it does it for free and you're wondering just how the hell Vixy is making any money out of this because it must cost *money* to run a site like this and …

Sorry, getting ahead of myself.

Vixy is indeed a free piece of software that runs via a Web site. There's nothing to download and nothing to install. It all happens via your browser. Here we go:

1. Copy the URL of the video you'd like to download.
2. Open vixy.net in your desktop browser.
3. Paste the video's URL into Vixy's URL box (see Figure 15-2).
4. Select an iPod/iPhone-friendly file format from the pop-up menu (MP4 or H.264-MP4).
5. Click the Start button. Things will percolate behind the scenes for a moment as the service locates the video file and prepares it for transmogrification. When everything's ready, Vixy will move to the download page you see in Figure 15-3. Note the big Right-Click Here link. We will be right-clicking there.
6. Right-click or Control+click on the link to bring up your browser's contextual menu. Select either Save link as or Download linked file to start the download process.
7. Give the video file a name that ends with ".mp4" to make sure that iTunes and your computer correctly identify it as a video file.
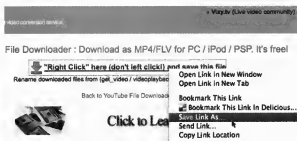
Figure 15-3
Vixy, when your video is ready for downloading

Of all these simple steps, step 7 is the only one that's even marginally tricky. Your browser will automatically choose a name identical to the link you've selected (the app's dumb and doesn't know any better). If you just blithely click OK there's a good chance that iTunes will refuse to import the file. So, choose wisely.

And that's it. You'll have an MP4 file on your hard drive that you can import straight into iTunes and thence to your iPhone or iPod Touch.

Great! But Vixy has two big drawbacks:

- It's a YouTube-only solution. That's definitely the top video site, but it's no help with videos from MySpace or the many other places.

- It's often unavailable or unusable. Remember, this is a *service*, not a piece of desktop software; you're sharing it with God-knows how many other users, all clamoring for conversions at the same time. In fact, I can sort of expect it not to work during normal human hours. You've got a real chance late at night or early in the morning. And let's not forget …

- It could disappear at any moment. It's not a piece of software that lives on your

PC or Mac, safe and sound. If Vixy keeps losing money or if someone decides to sue, it folds its tents and that's all she wrote.

But it's a great tool. Just don't let it be your *only* tool. Fortunately, there are other implements for your tool belt.

VIVA VARIETY: KEEPVID

Okey-doke: If you want to grab a video from a site that Vixy doesn't support (that is, anything but YouTube), or if it's some unreasonable time of day like 7:20 p.m. or the site is too busy, you simply move on to KeepVid.

Like Vixy, KeepVid is a free service you use via a Web browser. Vixy grabs the video and converts it to an iPhone-friendly format. KeepVid is a download tool; you'll need to convert the downloaded file from Adobe Flash format to an MP4. *But* KeepVid has the advantage of supporting dozens of different video sites.

Your Vixy skills will translate right over to KeepVid:

1. Copy the URL of the video you want to snag straight from the address bar of the Web page. Again, see Figure 15-1.
2. Go to keepvid.com.
3. Paste the URL into KeepVid's URL field and click the Download button. (see Figure 15-4).

The software on KeepVid's servers will percolate a bit and find your video's actual Flash-formatted file on the video service's server. When it's finished, a Download link will appear on the page (see Figure 15-5).

If your video is from any service other than YouTube, you'll find a link to a Flash

KEEPVID

download streaming videos

KEEPVID Bookmarklet
1.) Drag this button onto your links toolbar
2.) Click Keep It when watching a video to download it

URL: http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&videoID=40617476

Figure 15-4
KeepVid.com, your universal video grabber

AVS Video Converter
Recommended Download
★★★★★

FREE Download

FREE AVS
All format

ALL Formats Converter

Download/ Take

Links found on http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.ir
Report any problems to: lasjewel.com@kaolee.com

• Download – (High – Low Quality)
Right-click download link and choose "Save Link As..." to download

Figure 15-5
Downloading the Flash
video file that KeepVid
located for you

Video file (.flv). That's the standard (but not iPhone-friendly) format used by most sites.

But if you *are* snagging something from YouTube, it's likely that you'll see a link to the Flash file *and* a second download link to an MP4 video file that can be imported directly into iTunes with no conversion necessary! Apple has partnered with YouTube to convert huge chunks of its library to Apple-compatible formats; this is why the built-in YouTube player app works so well.

Awesome. Obviously, if there's a link to an MP4 file, then that's the one you'll want. Otherwise, take what you can get.

Right-click or Control+click on the Download link and save the file to your hard drive (as with Vixy, look for Save Link As or Download Linked File or some such in the pop-up menu that appears).

As with Vixy, your browser will choose a filename that makes no sense. Give the file a name that the humans can relate to and make sure it ends with .flv if a Flash video file, or .mp4 if it's an MP4 video file.

Cool. If you were lucky enough to snag an MP4 file, you're done. Go out for waffles.

But if it's a Flash file, you'll need to convert it to MP4. Well, slugger, I know that you're feeling kind of blue right now, but it's about time you realize that life is full of

disappointments. It's not our problems that define us; it's how we *overcome* those problems.

Sorry. I have no kids and my innate parenting and nurturing skills sometimes need to find an outlet.

You just need to process those video files with a conversion utility and, though it's a crowded market, there are two great ones for PCs and Macs that are free for the downloading.

Stick around for a bit and I'll tell you about that stuff, but hang around a sec while I mention a limitation of KeepVid: This app, too, can't snag video from every source.

Now that more and more networks and studios are "getting it" about digital content delivery, networks are creating whole services for the purpose of giving you free access to that episode of *House* that you missed last night.

But they're still the enemies of the proletariat, in so much that they've set up their servers in such a way that it's almost impossible for a service like KeepVid or any other mortal utility from locating and downloading the video.

Hmm. If only there were a *superhuman* utility that could capture *any* sort of streaming video.

CONVERTING VIDEO FILES TO IPHONE FORMAT

Well, that's for later. For now, let's convert that Flash file to something your iPhone can deal with, shall we?

Windows: Applian's Replay Converter

Google "iPhone flash video converter" and you'll find dozens and *dozens* of apps and Web sites that want to handle the job for you. Nearly all these are poor-quality rehashes of open-source conversion tools. Some are free, but as you visit the site and you might wonder if this tool is going to search your hard drive for credit-card numbers and transmit them to a Zybloborgian crime syndicate. Others are commercial apps, but they're woefully overpriced for what they deliver.

In all that noise, I do recommend two Windows utilities. The best of the free conversion apps is Videora's iPhone Converter, downloadable from videora.com. Flash video goes in, iPhone-compatible video comes out.

But the one I want to show you is from Applian. It's called Replay Converter, and you can download a free demo from applian.com. If you like it (and don't want the utility to watermark your videos with an ad) give Applian $30.

Thirty bucks! Wow! But actually, I encourage you to send Applian $99 for the full Replay Capture Suite, which includes all of Applian's megasuperhyperawesome utilities for capturing all kinds of media (video *and* audio) to iPhone-study formats. Stay tuned to the end of this chapter and you'll see why I'm such a big fan of Applian.

Back to Replay Converter, which is a simple, one-window utility (see Figure 15-6).

Figure 15-6
Converting Flash to something actually useful, with Replay Converter

1. Click the Add Files button. Select one or more Flash files via Windows's standard file picker.

2. Click Convert to Video File in the bottom tier of radio buttons.

3. Select iPod Video/High Quality in the Target Format pop-up menu.

4. Click the Go button.

And then there's the usual amount of percolation while the app engages in hard-core math. Eventually, a pair of MP4 files is deposited on your hard drive. Unless you specified a new location for the converted files, they'll appear in the same folder as the original Flash files.

Drag the little buggers into iTunes and enjoy.

Macintosh: iSquint

Hello, hello: This is more like it. iSquint (see Figure 15-7) is precisely the sort of app the Windows users were hoping to find. It's a transcoder that's so good, there's really no need to mention any other. And it's free. Go to isquint.org and download the freebie. It makes the whole process simple and efficient:
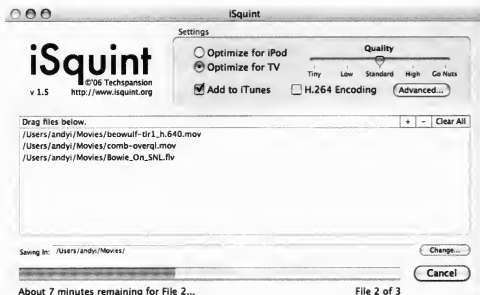
Figure 15-7
iSquint: one Mac transcoder to unite them all

1. Add files to iSquint's conversion queue. You can either drag the files right into the list or you can bring up the standard Mac file picker by clicking the little + (plus) button.

2. Select a size. iSquint doesn't have an explicit iPhone mode. But it can convert movies to either the smaller iPod size, or a larger size suitable for TV viewing. As right-thinking iPhone and iPod Touch owners, we have nice big screens, so go ahead and choose TV.

3. Click the Add to iTunes checkbox to have iSquint add the resulting video files to your iTunes library as soon as they're finished.

4. Go down to the Saving In box and click the Change button to select a location for the converted files.

5. Click Start to get the ball rolling.

And as usual, this is an excellent time to get to know your spouse and children a little better. Because this conversion is going to take a while and, yes, you'll be *that* bored.

There is indeed a Quality control, but it's generally not worth messing around with. You're starting off with a video file that was compressed for YouTube, so bumping that controller up won't really make the video look any better.

Technically you'll get better video if you click the H.264 Encoding option. But the increase in quality isn't dramatic and the increase in conversion time is devastating. Check it, and you'll have enough time to actually take the family out for kite-flying followed by a picnic lunch. Leave it unchecked and you're back at your computer before you've finished one game of Sorry all the way through.

Eventually, iSquint will complete the conversion and announce that it's done so by saying something clever. Bravo.

SUPERHUMAN VIDEO CAPTURE FOR WINDOWS

See what I did there? I foreshadowed this entire section with a teaser in the last section. And here you are! Quite the manipulator am I, eh?

Okay. Like I said, all the above methods have limits. They don't work unless the video service has done next to nothing to hide the locations of the video files on their servers. So the *really great* services (like Hulu.com, which hosts network prime-time shows in their entirety a mere 24 hours after they've aired) are out of the running.

And what about live, streaming video? Lots of cool things happen in real time via streaming. Like your video chats with your friends, Congress debating a grease and petroleum-derived coatings and lubricants subsidy surcharge on CSPAN, that sort of thing.

The most useful utility of them all is one that does a complete end run around the problem of locating the source of the video. It's streaming into your PC; a superutility would just tap into that stream and divert the flow into a video file at the same time that your browser is playing it through a window.

Applian makes an *insanely* good Windows-only app called Replay Media Catcher (see Figure 15-8). And it's another $40 but (holy cats!) wait until you see how well it works and how easy it is to use. Suffice to say that *this* is why I was recommending that you give Applian $100 for its full suite of capture utilities (which includes Media Catcher)

instead of going with a freebie Flash converter. By the time you buy all the Applian products I'll so earnestly recommend in this book, it'll be a big bargain. And once you see how well these things work … you'll be sold.

So: back to last night's episode of *House*. You *could* buy it from the iTunes store for two or three bucks. *Or* you could do this:

1. Launch the Media Catcher app and open Hulu.com in my browser.
2. Click Media Catcher's Start Recording button.
3. Switch over to your browser, navigate to the newest *House*, and start it playing.

> **TIP**
>
> Honestly, exactly what goes on over there at Applian? The folks there make capture utilities that are simply supernaturally good. There's absolutely nothing like Media Catcher for the Mac. Nothing. And this utility is one of the reasons why I have a copy of Windows installed on my MacBook. When a utility is good enough to warrant shutting down your system of choice and rebooting into a whole different operating system *just* to do this one thing … well, that's one hell of an app.
>
> It's also a reason for Mac users like me not to act so cocky. An OS is the greatest thing in the world until you find that *one* app for The Other System that your machine can't run.
>
> I'm not used to being on the wrong side of that fence. It's dark and scary.
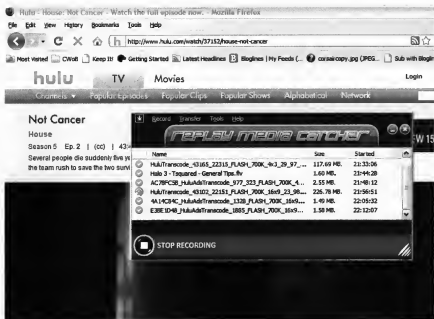
Figure 15-8
Capture any streaming video with Replay Media Catcher — software that merits applause.

If you switch back to Media Catcher, you'll notice something cool: It has *automatically* sensed that a video stream has opened. Every time Hulu (or any other app running at the time) starts a stream, Catcher opens a new capture file for it. The truck ad before the episode? Captured. The episode itself? Captured. An interstitial ad for macaroni and cheese? Captured.

As the name suggests, Media Capture doesn't download the video directly from Hulu's servers. It acts like a VCR, recording the show in real time as it plays.

When the show's over, Capture automatically closes the file and takes a very smart guess at the name. This episode of *House* has the show name *and* the episode title.

Click the Stop Recording button. The app has already saved the file, but this will prevent it from continuing to capture and save every stream it sees.

At this point you will be fumbling for more things to do but trust me: That's all there is. I now have a 42-minute Flash video file of the episode. All I need to do is convert it from Flash to MP4. The same utilities I recommended in the last section will work just fine.

Incredible. I've been using this utility for a few months now and still I say: incredible. Figure out how much dough you've spent downloading TV shows from iTunes and tell me that Replay Media Capture is overpriced.

I try to be on guard against major expenses that are secretly just gateways to a series of *additional* major expenses. Like a game con-

sole. Or a boat. Children. That sort of thing.

And the iPhone and iPod Touch are no different. They're swell devices in and of themselves, but what's the harm in buying this *one* episode of *Saturday Night Live?* Just *one* series pass to *Lost?* Eventually, you've got an iPhone chock-full of video entertainment and a house with lots of bare spots on the wall where your great-grandfather's valuable art collection used to hang.

But there's a hell of a lot of great content floating around in video sites. And it's all free. True, Hulu wanted you to buy that episode of *Family Guy* from the iTunes Store instead of capturing it, and YouTube wants you to have to keeping coming back to the site and watching commercials instead of simply adding the video to your media library.

Be fair, though. I'm sure that when the semipro skateboarder who *thought* he'd be teaching hundreds of fans how to do a 720 Sherman Helmsley with a half-Weezie layback but instead wound up teaching hundreds of thousands of office workers that a steady job with good health insurance is nothing to scoff at want the video to be seen by 2,283,911 mocking hipsters (as of 4:24 this afternoon). We can't always get what we want.

Oh, unless we want to see John Lennon's interview on the *Dick Cavett Show* on our iPhones. That's totally doable.

16

Books and Huge-ish Documents

The Skim

Commercial Books ⊛ Building Your Own Books ⊛
Finding Free Books Online

Yes, indeed, Apple has missed the boat in the most exceptional
Missed the Boat-ish way possible. A book reader is every bit as key
to the iPhone and iPod Touch experience as almost any other kind of
media and yet there's no built-in support for it.

The iPhone is that computer and that media library that you carry
with you when you don't think you'll need either. Is Apple suggesting
that America's transportation system is now running at such stellar peak
efficiency that we're never stuck waiting for either a depar-
ture announcement or the cold, sweet kiss of death, whichever comes
first?

In case someone from Apple is reading: This is most assuredly not the
case.

The iPhone has a brilliant big crisp screen and the ability to turn
pages with just a flick of the finger. It's a natural for reading books. I'll
be frank and say that I'd rather curl up on the sofa with a thick paper-
back than a slim iPhone for two or three hours, but when you need
to kill a good half an hour cooling your heels in your dentist's waiting
room or proofread a long report on the train ride to work, the iPhone is
an ideal tool.

Figure 16-1
eReader.com sells current, commercial books for iPhones and other devices.

Well, Apple might not be interested in making money by selling books for the iPhone but others are certainly eager to stick their hands in the till. And it's easy to convert both the free books you can download online as well as the big documents you have on your hard drive into formats that can be read in the cushy comfort of an iPhone book reader.

COMMERCIAL BOOKS

Electronic book distribution hasn't achieved even a fraction of the escape velocity of online music sales. It's sort of a famous uncracked nut of marketing. It's an obvious direction for the business, and plenty of companies have convinced themselves that they've found the right combination of pricing, convenience, technology, and marketing to finally convince consumers that dead trees are best left alive but so far ... well, the Huddled Masses must be afraid of dropping their BlackBerries and Palms and laptops in the

tub or something. It's therefore possible that Danielle Steele will never crack the e-book market to any serious extent.

Amazon.com is making terrific strides with its Kindle e-book reader. If Amazon and Apple had any sense, they'd team up and license the proprietary copy-protected Kindle book format for an iPhone version of the Kindle Store and book reader.

Okay. That's all too bad. But the online e-book retailer eReader is doing a Very Nice Job. While it's true that it falls short of the ideal (in which you can just plain assume that any book you'd like to buy at a bookstore is available for download), your chances of finding something good to read that *wasn't* written in the dim, dark ages of Long Ago, Far Away, and Long-Since Lapsed into Public Domain are actually very good (see Figure 16-1).

I mean, Neil Gaiman just came out with a new book two days ago and look, there it is, ready for download. If you *do* enjoy the Long-Since Lapsed into Public Domain genre — I suppose this Dickens fellow sort of knew what he was doing — there are also plenty of free and cheap-as-free PDF titles available.

eReader.com works just like Amazon.com. Click, search, browse, click, buy. After creating a free account on the site, of course. Your books are delivered in the form of DRM'd (copy-protected) files that can only be read by eReader-compatible reader apps. There are versions for just about every desktop and mobile OS out there.

Including the iPhone, in fact. The eReader app is free, and it acts both as a reader and as a mechanism for downloading and installing the books that you purchased via a Web browser.
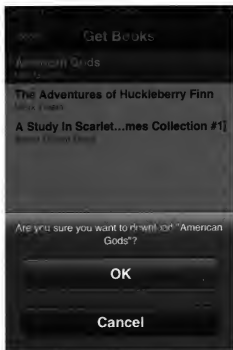
Figure 16-2
Adding new books to your eReader bookshelf

After you've bought your books, you can install them on your iPhone directly from the device:

1. Launch the eReader app and tap the + (plus) button the Bookshelf page. Tell eReader that you want to download books from eReader.com by tapping the eReader Sites button.

2. Enter your eReader.com login information. A list of your purchased books will appear.

3. Tap the name of the book you'd like to download. eReader will confirm that you really want to grab it (see Figure 16-2).

The download will begin automatically.
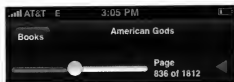
— Ben Franklin, Poor Richard's Almanack

Three cold days passed. The thermometer never made it up to the zero mark, not even at midday. Shadow wondered how people had survived this weather in the days before electricity, before thermal face masks and lightweight thermal underwear, before easy travel.

He was down at the video, tanning, bait and tackle store, being shown Hinzelmann's hand-tied trout flies. They

Figure 16-3
Reading with eReader

When finished, the new book will appear with the rest of the titles in your bookshelf.

The first time you open a purchased book, eReader will confirm that you bought it legitimately by asking for the credit-card number, which you used to purchase the book. This seems squirrely, I know, but if eReader were out to commit card fraud, well, I've had this for a few months and the folks there haven't made their move yet.

The reading experience is nice. You're presented with a full and flush page of text and the eReader app's buttons and user-interface elements don't appear unless you tap the screen to call them into view (see Figure 16-3). You can adjust font sizes, page flow, and make other adjustments to make the

experience more comfortable.

Otherwise, you turn pages with a careless flick of your finger. Like all friendly iPhone apps, the screen rotates as the iPhone does.

I like the overall eReader experience. Its prices are no bargain (I've no idea why an electronic edition should cost the same as the dead-trees edition). And I do wish its library of titles was as broad as the Amazon Kindle's. But then, the Kindle's selection isn't as broad as what you'd find at a Barnes & Noble store.

But the selection at eReader is much, much better than the selection at one of those little bookshops at the airport, at least. At this writing, the selection is in the category of "You *might* find what you were looking for, and even if you don't, you'll certainly find *something* you'll like."

Which frankly is the best that we can hope for before Apple enters the e-book market, partners with Amazon, and utterly crushes eReader and all other competitors. Fingers crossed for that.

BUILDING YOUR OWN BOOKS

eReader.com brings a friendly, iTunes-ish (well, more like "iTunes-ish-y") face to the e-book experience. But as indicated above, there are hundreds of thousands of books on the Internet that are free for the downloading. To say nothing about all the documents that you come across in your professional and personal life that beg for a more luxurious reading experience than the bare-bones Microsoft Office reader that's baked into the iPhone OS.

LexCycle (lexcycle.com) seems to have applied both lobes of its collective brain to the problem of iPhone e-book reading because it's come up with a total slam-dunk
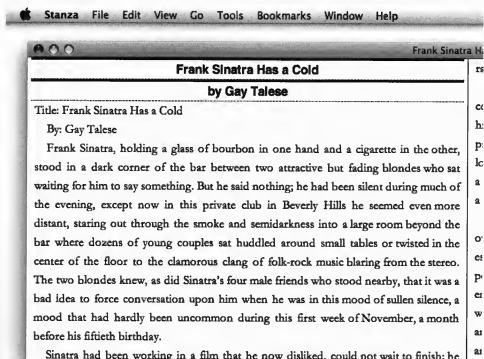
 Stanza File Edit View Go Tools Bookmarks Window Help

Frank Sinatra Has a Cold
by Gay Talese

Title: Frank Sinatra Has a Cold

By: Gay Talese

Frank Sinatra, holding a glass of bourbon in one hand and a cigarette in the other, stood in a dark corner of the bar between two attractive but fading blondes who sat waiting for him to say something. But he said nothing; he had been silent during much of the evening, except now in this private club in Beverly Hills he seemed even more distant, staring through the smoke and semidarkness into a large room beyond the bar where dozens of young couples sat huddled around small tables or twisted in the center of the floor to the clamorous clang of folk-rock music blaring from the stereo. The two blondes knew, as did Sinatra's four male friends who stood nearby, that it was a bad idea to force conversation upon him when he was in this mood of sullen silence, a mood that had hardly been uncommon during this first week of November, a month before his fiftieth birthday.

Sinatra had been working in a film that he now disliked, could not wait to finish; he

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Figure 16-4
Desktop book reading and management with Stanza

---

of a solution: Stanza, a commercial desktop eBook reader app (available for both PC and Mac) and a free iPhone edition to complement each other wonderfully.

Figure 16-4 shows the Mac edition. The desktop edition is itself a stirring testimonial to the credibility of electronic books. It can open just about any text document imaginable — including all the popular eBook formats floating around.

"What formats are those?"

Great. Just great. Okay, you asked for it: "Open eBook, Amazon Kindle, Mobipocket, HTML, PDF, Microsoft LIT, PalmDoc, plain text, RTF, Microsoft Word, and FictionBook."

Yes, even Amazon Kindle-formatted books! Alas, it can't open or read books that are protect by digital rights management, but both the desktop and iPhone editions of Stanza can read any unlocked and unprotected file.

But this book isn't here to sell desktop book readers. You only care about the iPhone angle, don't you?

Copying an e-book or other document from your desktop to the iPhone edition of Stanza is so simple, I actually found it confusing at first. And it was my fault, not the app's: I kept expecting there to be extra steps!

But there's almost nothing to it:

1. In the desktop app, open all the books and documents you'd like to load on
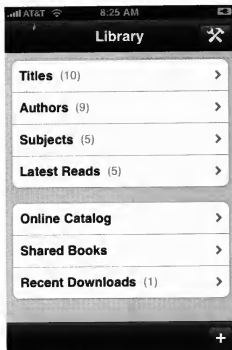
Figure 16-5
Stanza's Library page, the app's main dashboard

Figure 16-6
Grabbing a doc or e-book from the desktop Stanza into your iPhone

your iPhone.

2. Go to the Tools menu and make sure Enable Sharing has been checked.

3. Open the iPhone edition of Stanza. From the Library page, tap the Shared Books button (see Figure 16-5). Stanza shows you a list of every computer it can see on the local Wi-Fi network that's running a Sharing-enabled copy of Desktop Stanza.

4. Tap the name of your computer. Stanza shows you a list of every document that the app has open.

5. Tap the document you'd like to download. After a quick confirmation (see Figure 16-6), it's sent to your iPhone.

You're done. The new book appears in your iPhone's library, ready to be read (see Figure 16-7).

You'll find that the reading experience is similar to eReader's. Screen space is at a premium, so the user interface only shimmers into visibility when you tap the screen. But Stanza's developers have made some good design choices. A tiny screen will never be as comfortable to read as a full-sized book, but Stanza's screen is notably cleaner and more elegant than any other e-book reader I've seen.

Stanza also can add books to its library directly via your Internet connection, with no desktop machine necessary. But there's

all AT&T 📶   8:32 AM

← Frank Sinatra Has a...   ⓘ

Has a Cold

Title: Frank Sinatra Has a Cold
By: Gay Talese

Frank Sinatra, holding a glass of bourbon in one hand and a cigarette in the other, stood in a dark corner of the bar between two attractive but fading blondes who sat waiting for him to say something. But he said nothing; he had been silent during much of the evening, except now in this private club in Beverly Hills he seemed even more distant, staring out through the smoke and semidarkness into a large room beyond the bar where dozens of young couples sat huddled around small

[book reader toolbar: 📖 ✿ 🔍]
1/60

Figure 16-7
Reading a book with Stanza

no online store; you need to know a specific URL from which the app can download an eBook directly. And the book has to be in ePub format.

Just tap the Tools button at the top of the Library page, tap the Download Book at URL button, and then pray to God that you type the URL in correctly.

On the plus side, if you come across a link to an ePub book in Safari, one tap will download and open it in Stanza.

FINDING FREE BOOKS ONLINE

Authors all over the world are doing their part for culture and scholarship each and every day, by writing something brilliant and

then dying. Wait seven or eight decades and presto: you have a brand-new public domain book that you can install on your iPhone without paying a single corn-whistling cent.

Your go-to sites, as a skinflint literary aesthete:

- ⊙ **Project Gutenberg** (gutenberg.org). The granddaddy of public-domain book depositories. If it isn't here, the author prolly ain't even dead yet. Most popular titles are available in multiple formats, in fact.

- ⊙ **Wowio** (wowio.com). Contains the usual old suspects but also a large library of modern titles by authors who either are forward-thinking enough to see the commercial value in giving away their work or can't get their trash published any other way. But it's always worth a browse.

- ⊙ **Tor Books** (tor.com). Many major publishers offer "promotional" copies of commercial books in their catalogues; the month when H. Mark Veryfamousauthor releases his newest
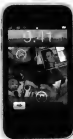
TIDBIT

It's a little-known bit of history: the purpose of the copyright system, as Thomas Jefferson envisioned it, was *not* to protect the rights of authors. It was to make works of art and scholarship available to the widest audience possible.

Authors and creators want to make money from their work without it being stolen or reproduced without their permission. But society benefits from the ability to simply distribute creative works without restriction. So Society and Creators made a deal: As an author, I get legal protection for my work for my whole life plus the lives of my kids and grandkids. After 70 or 80 years, it stops making money for people and belongs to the public as a whole.

Not a bad compromise. I bet my great-great-grandkids would just spend my royalty checks on novelty pens and cheap gin, anyway.

book, the publisher releases a title from his back-catalogue as a free download for a limited time. Tor is a reliable source for these things, and they're a leading publisher of science fiction. Just enter "download" or "e-book" into the site's search box.

○ **Memoware** (memoware.com). Largely a public-domain archive, but with a twist: most of these titles are formatted for mobile readers. So the reading experience might be superior.

○ **Webscription** (websubscription.net). Libraries of books by authors who support the free-publishing movement, and publishers who think it's a great marketing tool. If you like the overall library here, there's a free iPhone app that browses, downloads, and reads these books without the need to grab 'em on a desktop machine first. Visit iphone-bookshelf.com for more details.

The case in favor of putting eBooks on an iPhone is made by the presence of a battered and tattered but beloved paperback of P.G. Wodehouse's *The Code of the Woosters* in my satchel. It's never left that bag.

Why? Because I'm a reader and I get nervous if I leave the house without anything to read. With that book in tow, I know that I always have an emergency book on hand.

When you use your iPhone as a book reader, you can have dozens of books with you wherever you go. You never leave the house without your iPhone and thus you'll never find an idle moment when you can't be reading something.

PART IV

The Office

17

Calendars and Contacts

The Skim

Dealing with Nonstandard Apps ▶
Importing vCard and iCalendar Data into a Mac ▶
Importing vCard and iCalendar Data into a Windows PC

Hmm. So I suppose I can't talk you out of this idea. No matter what I say, you're going to use your iPhone or your iPod Touch to store an address book and a personal calendar.

No, I don't approve of this. I've examined this from all angles and you can't escape the realization that address books and calendars each increases the risk of human social contact. That sort of thing can really cut into the time you have available to translate *The Wizard of Oz* into Klingon.

If you're using Microsoft Outlook or the standard Mac OS apps (iCal and Address Book) to manage your calendars and contacts on the desktop, you've got this bit covered already. iTunes automaticlly syncs your data to the device. Move on, and thanks for reading this intro. Here, take a free tip on how to make ice cubes: If you use hot water, they'll come out looking nice and clear instead of cloudy. Off you go.

But Microsoft Outlook and Apple's iCal and Address Book are the only apps that iTunes supports directly. If you use Google Calendar or Lotus Notes or any other app to manage that big wobbly mound of names and phone numbers and agreed-upon dates and times when humans can step right up and break your heart, you'll need to bring in some help.

TIP

The definition of a "standard" app changes over time. Microsoft Outlook (and Entourage on the Mac) were "nonstandard" e-mail apps before the iPhone 2.0 software came out; now support for their Microsoft Exchange e-mail and calendar server is native to the iPhone and iPod Touch — you can sync wirelessly, without iTunes getting in the act.

Exchange users account for most of the business e-mail accounts out there, but not all. If you use a "nonstandard" app like Lotus Notes, now there's an app from IBM called iNotes available in the App Store that lets your iPhone or iPod Touch sync directly to Lotus Notes's Domino e-mail and calendar server — again, no need to get iTunes involved.

Don't be surprised if a similar app becomes available to give the third major e-mail and calendar system — Novell GroupWise — native access as well.

When that happens, you'd have to use a truly "nonstandard" e-mail app to be in a situation where you have to go through the sync convolutions this chapter describes.

DEALING WITH NONSTANDARD APPS

So for some unfathomable reason you're not free to use Outlook or the standard Mac apps for managing your calendars and contacts. I'm guessing it has something to

do with an arbitrary rule that someone at your company put into place after realizing that they've been promoted way above their personal skill set and desperately needed to do *something* to signify that they have actual power and authority. Let's say your company has standardized on DiscoAppointments-AndFolks 3.0.

To get all that data into your iPhone or iPod Touch, you're going to have to use one of iTunes's approved apps as a go-between. That is, instead of iTunes automatically syncing all your data every time you plug your device into your desktop, you first manually export all your DiscoAppointmentsAndFolks data to Outlook, or iCal and Address book. Once the "approved" app holds all your data, you plug in your iPhone and iTunes updates it.

See? iTunes is still working with the familiar apps it knows and loves.

There are two industry-standard formats for moving contact and calendar data between apps and platforms:

◐ vCard format is used for address book data.

◐ iCalendar format is used for calendar data. And just to make sure there's as much confusion on the matter as there can possibly be, it's sometimes shortened to "iCal." During explanations like these, it's inevitably lengthened to "iCal," not to be confused with the calendar app that ships on all Macs."

Most modern apps can export their data in both of these formats.

IMPORTING VCARD AND ICALENDAR DATA INTO A MAC

Importing the data into the Mac OS is alluringly cake-like. Apple iCal has an easy-

Figure 17-1
The Mac's address book app can import vCard data without any help.

Figure 17-2
SyncWiz: making Microsoft Outlook into a much better class of idiot

as-pie Import command under its File menu. Just point it at the exported data and you're in business. Ditto for the Address Book. Choose File ▶ Import ▶ vCards and then navigate to the file that contains all of your exported contacts (see Figure 17-1).

IMPORTING VCARD AND ICALENDAR DATA INTO A WINDOWS PC

On the Windows side, things are just a *bit* trickier. And I'm using "a bit trickier" to act as an efficient substitute for about two pages of passionate screeding about why the devil an important, industry-leading app like Microsoft Outlook doesn't directly support the most popular contact data interchange format on the whole bloody planet.

iCalendar data imports just fine. But what's up with the vCard support? It can import vCard data, but (oh, dear God) *only the first name in the file.* If you have 500 names in there, it'll stop with "AAAAAA Custom Paint and Body, Inc.," ignoring all the rest.

So unless you're a way more patient person than I am, go to http://sync-wiz.com and buy SyncWiz, a conversion and synchronization plug-in utility for Outlook (see Figure 17-2). It also integrates into the app seamlessly, adding *actual* support for vCard, instead of this purely ceremonial feature that Microsoft slapped in there. And it's quite reasonably priced at $25.

It's wonderful that even the simplest, most straightforward, and most reliable feature on this whole phone has at least one or two gotchas, isn't it?

When I call this little parcel of frustration "wonderful," I speak of course from the point of view of somebody who makes his living explaining things to people. Thank God the world of technology is so badly scuffed, dinged, and rusted out in places. If all this stuff worked the way it ought to, I'd probably be loading trucks at the UPS depot for a living.

Come to think of it, if I worked at UPS, I'd probably be on a group dental plan.

Damn. I just brought myself down without even planning it. ...

🔲🔲🔲🔲

18

Clippings, Notes, and Lists

The Skim

Why Not Notepad? ▶ Notes and Clippings with Evernote ▶
Lists with Zenbe ▶ Not Essential But Very Cool: I Want Sandy

"I write doo-dads, because it's a doo-dad sort of town." Thus wrote Dorothy Parker, brilliant columnist, poet, and wit.

I suppose just for the sake of balance and accuracy I should also include an additional Parker quote:: "*BATS!* Giant, hairy bats! Circling my typewriter and pelting me with copper spoons filled with jam! *AIEEEE!!!*" She was a treasure of American literature but she did drink quite a lot, you know.

Nonetheless, she had a solid point there about doo-dads. If anything, the communal town in which we all live is even doo-daddier since the days of the Great War. Your life is filled with little bits of information that defies any sort of ready organization or catchall filing system. Still, you need 'em. What's the address of that luncheonette on Lexington Avenue you wanted to visit on your way to the Metropolitan Museum of Art? What are the museum's hours? What bus do you take to get from the museum to your friend's place in SoHo afterward?

One afternoon in New York City, three absolutely essential doo-dads. And this was just for a *fun* afternoon. When there's business and meetings and money involved, you can accumulate dozens of these things over the course of a week.

WHY NOT NOTEPAD?

Now then. If you've spent any amount of time playing with your iPhone, the phrase "tons of pieces of seemingly random and unconnected information with barely any sense or order about it" conjures up one thought: "Notepad."

("Also, 'This very book,'" says my girlfriend, reading over my shoulder as I type. I include this comment so that on future first dates with future girlfriends, I have documentary evidence to back up my given answer to the question "So how did your last relationship end?")

But there are a few problems with using the Notes app for actual notes.

The least-obvious problem is the fact that

Apple has yet to include the most obvious feature of all: the ability to synchronize the Notes you keep using the Notes feature of either Microsoft Outlook (which supports notes) or Apple's own Mail app (which also supports notes) to the notes in the Notes app on the iPhone.

If I used the word "notes" a lot it's in hopes that maybe someone at Apple will read this chapter and understand that notes are, like, a common element and the lack of sync service for these things is, well, odd.

The second problem: The Notes app isn't very flexible. It's really just a more colorful version of what was available on the first Palm Pilot PDA back in the Nineties. Not exactly a feature-horse, is it?

And third, there's the usual hassle of iPhones and iPod Touches: Your sole conduit for putting info on the device is a copy of iTunes on one specific computer. If someone tells you, "Oh, but if you're going to the Metropolitan Museum, don't go into the Egyptian wing on the first Tuesday of the month; that's when the moon god raises all the mummies from the dead and sends them on a rampage in a sickening harvest for human flesh" and you think, "Golly, I should probably have that info handy," you're out of luck if you aren't at the keyboard of your desktop computer at that moment.

Yes, notes are most useful when they become ubiquitous.

Fortunately, there are plenty of tools to handle those random bits of trivial ranging to essential information.

NOTES AND CLIPPINGS WITH EVERNOTE

Ever since I got my first one, my smartphone has been a lint trap for little scraps of
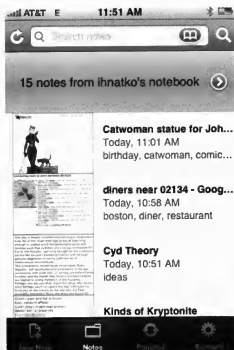
Figure 18-1
Evernote: your big, friendly, wobbly mound of information.

Figure 18-2
Retrieving a note in Evernote

info. It's like that pad of paper that I used to keep in my shirt pocket. An address, a phone number, information about a book I wanted to buy or a book I wanted to write ... just a free-floating barge of bagatelles.

Evernote (evernote.com) is an online service and a free iPhone app that really doesn't care if you want to carefully organize your life and your info or if you just want to plop it all in one careless heap. It's all about helping you capture data wherever you are and getting it back to you whenever you want it.

For that reason, there's never any need to keep your PC, Mac, iPhone, home, and office hardware synchronized with fresh notes; it's all stored on Evernote's servers.

You can download client apps for every platform imaginable, or just read and add to your notes from any machine with a Web browser. You can e-mail or text info into your account.

It's this flexibility that makes Evernote a winner. Keeping your notes on a server *does* mean that you can't access them when you're away from an Internet connection, but otherwise it's a slick and powerful solution.

Figure 18-1 shows you my main Evernote notebook — its collections of notes. I can establish multiple notebooks for different kinds of info but I prefer to just have everything together in one place. The figure shows a gift I'm trying to find for a pal, a list of diners that I pulled off Google, an idea I jotted
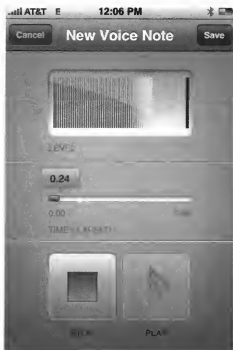
Figure 18-3
Recording a new voice note

down for a story about Cyd Charisse, and of course a list of all the different kinds of Kryptonite and the effect that each kind has on Superman.

(See? It's good not to get caught without this sort of info handy.)

And as the Search field implies, I can quickly type in a keyword to bring up any note I want. Otherwise, your Notes are presented in the order in which they were last viewed or edited, to keep the freshest stuff at the top.

Tap to read a note (see Figure 18-2). And once a note is open, you can edit it or e-mail it on to someone who can get some use out of the thing. Like Lex Luthor or somebody.

Yup, it's a bummer that you can't just

download a whole notebook into your iPhone's memory and have access to it even when there's no Internet. But if there's an important bit of info, I just e-mail it to myself and then make sure I've downloaded all my messages before boarding the plane or entering the state of Vermont.

It doesn't matter where I was when I recorded this info. But the iPhone app offers a full range of note types, which you can create by tapping the New Note button. You get:

○ **Text notes.** Just go on ahead and type.

○ **Picture notes.** Either select a photo from your iPhone's Picture library, or tap the Snapshot button and take a photo live and in person. And Evernote has an incredible invisible feature: If you take a photo of something with text in it — a whiteboard, a street sign, a menu, anything — *it'll convert the image text to searchable text.* So if it's the end of the meeting and you're looking at a list of names of the people who've committed to bringing food to the company potluck and arson project, don't bother tapping all that information down. Take a snapshot. When you search for "cole-slaw" Evernote will retrieve the photo of the whiteboard.

○ **Voice notes.** Tap the button and a control panel for a voice recording appears (see Figure 18-3).

Every note you make can be tagged with descriptive keywords to make it easier to find later. You can even bookmark popular searches like "office project turducken" so that narrowing down 429 notes to just the eight that are related to your ongoing break-room culinary goal is just a tap or two away.

And if you give Evernote permission, it'll

Figure 18-4
Desktop Evernote clients are available for Windows and Mac (the Mac version is shown here).

even tag the note with your location when you created the note.

As you might expect, Evernote's desktop clients are more muscular than the iPhone edition. Figure 18-4 shows the Mac edition. The desktop version actually downloads data from the Evernote server, for a start.

You can also grab plug-ins that make it dead-simple to send information from any Web page into a new note. Just drag the Clip to Evernote bookmarklet from the Evernote. com's Download page into the bookmarks bar of your browser (if you're using Firefox, you can install a plug-in). From then on, any time you see something online that's worthy of capture, just highlight it with your mouse

and click the Clip to Evernote bookmark. A little window will pop up that lets you tag and otherwise modify your new note before it's added to your soup (see Figure 18-5). If you select nothing, the whole page will be noted.

LISTS WITH ZENBE

List and Task managers are those very, very "noisy" categories of software in the iPhone App Store. That is, there are way too many too choose from and the one or two best ones outclass the others by a laughable margin.

Zenbe Lists is one of those head-and-shoulders apps. It's my favorite because (like

gle | diners near [C ...] | [search]

Title | diners near 02134 - Google Search
Notebook | Ihnatko's notebook ▼
Tags | diner, restaurant, boston
Separate tag names with commas. Tags that do not exist will be created.
[Done] [Delete]

diners near 02134 - Google Search

EVERNOTE

ess results for dine

Stoneham   ● Del
Melrose   ● Bally
  Everett   ● Town
Malden   ● Sund Signed in as Andy Ihnatko
        ● Max's City Diner .... (617) 267-9393 · 26 reviews
        ● South Street Diner .... (617) 350-0028 · 21 reviews
rbor   ● Andy's Diner .... (617) 497-1444 · 8 reviews
        ● Talk of the Town Diner .... (617) 623-2369 · 3 reviews
        ● Mington Restaurant & Diner .... (781) 646-9266 · 16 reviews
        ● Kelly's Diner .... (617) 623-8102 · 13 reviews

rants in Boston
n 02134, part of the Boston area on Urbanspoon. Take a look at restaurant

Figure 18-5

Converting info on the Web to a note in your Evernote notebook

Evernote) it's so flexible. There are some wonderful apps for managing complicated goals and projects but only Zenbe is clear and powerful enough to handle just about anything that can be expressed as a list.

Shopping list? Sure. To-do's? Yup. Batting order for the Little League team you're coaching? Can do. Record of your gas mileage on a tank-by-tank basis? No sweat.

It doesn't have intense management features that support the "Getting Things Done" model of whatever. It lets you create multiple lists. It lets you attach notes to each item. It lets you re-order list items. It lets you check off items once they've been completed but it doesn't actually delete the item until you say so. Instead, it just grays it out (see Figure 18-6).

Suffice to say that Zenbe Lists justified $18 of the purchase price of my new iPhone.

Oh, how much is Zenbe Lists? Free. Come on. Why would anyone *charge* for an indispensable piece of professionally designed iPhone software?

(Yes, sarcasm. Well spotted, sir or madam!)

Unlike Evernote, your Zenbe lists are stored on your iPhone; head on through that tunnel without a care in the world, because access to your data doesn't rely on an Internet connection.

But *like* Evernote, Zenbe for iPhone is merely the mobile projection of the Zenbe Online Empire. Go ahead and use Zenbe list for days, weeks, months, even. If at some point you discover that you run so much of your life through this iPhone app and that
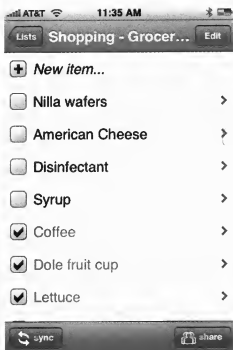
Figure 18-6
One life, multiple lists, via Zenbe

you'd like to work with your lists even when you're behind the wheel of such an arcane device as a desktop computer — or you'd simply like to share your list data with your desktop apps — head on over to http://lists. zenbe.com and create a free user account with Zenbe.

And presto!

You now can synchronize your iPhone lists with your central account and access your data from any machine with a Web browser (see Figure 18-7).

There's one catch, but it's minor: You need to explicitly tap the Sync button on the iPhone app to synchronize the handheld and the Web editions of your lists. Oh, big deal.

NOT ESSENTIAL BUT VERY COOL: I WANT SANDY!

Between Evernote and Zenbe Lists, you have nearly all your Random Information Needs covered. But there's another service that I like, and I like it because it's so weird, it's brilliant: Sandy.

It's yet another free service. Sign up for your free account at iwantsandy.com.

I ask you: If you made a million bucks a year, would you spend so much time managing your own to-do's and random information and appointments? I sure wouldn't. I'd have assistants to handle that stuff.

When you make as much as an honest journalist like myself, you have apps that record the name of the guy at AT&T who is your best source on bandwidth information, along with his e-mail address.

When you make as much as Steve Jobs, you pick up the phone and start talking as soon as you stop hearing a ringing tone. "Jack? Get me the guy I talked to that time, the one with the face. He was wearing a blue shirt. *And don't keep me waiting.*"

Sandy is the digital equivalent of that poor, beleaguered Jack or Becka or Louisa or Bob. Sandy isn't an application or even a Web site. *It's an e-mail address.*

Once you sign up, you're given a unique e-mail address for "your" Sandy. Add Sandy to your address book so you don't have to remember the address.

From then on, if you want Sandy to remember something, just e-mail her.

Seriously. Create a new e-mail:

```
To: Sandy
Subject: Dinner

Remind me about dinner with Josh
Rubin next Monday at the Tonga Room
on 18th Avenue, 8 PM
```
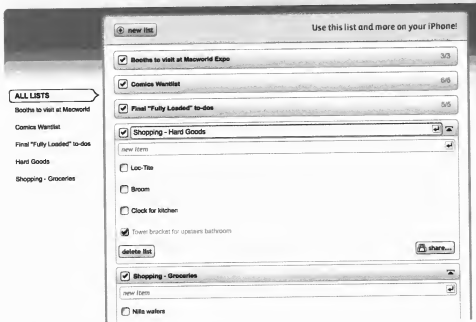
Figure 18-7
Accessing your lists online via Zenbe's online interface

And click Send. Servers at iwantsandy.com diligently parse the e-mail content and add a new appointment to your calendar.

You don't even need to explicitly send e-mails just to Sandy. E-mail is how I normally communicate with the world and of course, Josh and I set up this dinner meeting via messages. Once we'd agreed on a day and time, I could have just forwarded the e-mail to Sandy, with the subject "Remember this."

Or, when I replied to Josh to tell him, "Great, I'll see you there," I could have simply added a line "Sandy, remind me on Sunday" and cc'd Sandy. Sandy would have figured it out.

There are plenty of keywords in Sandy's

vocabulary. "Remember" just means "this isn't an appointment but the e-mail is worth hanging on to; stick it in my database."

I can tag information with certain descriptive words and phrases, tag things as to-do items, tag things as recurring items, make and add to lists, ask Sandy to remind me every day until a certain item or project is complete, remind me of a killer deadline a week in advance, …. It's easy to get the hang of it because it's all natural English.

Okay, but that's just getting information *into* the service. How do you get it back *out* again?

Easy. Sandy e-mails you every morning with a digest of the day's appointments and

From: Sendy [wantsendy.com]
Subject: **DAILY DIGEST: Thursday, 9/25/2008**
Date: September 25, 2008 8:07:25 AM EDT
To: Andy Ihnatko
Reply-To: Sendy [wantsendy.com]
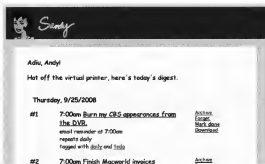
Figure 18-8
A friendly reminder from Sandy

reminders (see Figure 18-8).

When I park my car, I can e-mail Sandy "Remind me to move car in 30 minutes" and a half hour later, I'll get an e-mail from Sandy, as promised.

You can also e-mail or text Sandy with specific requests. The following e-mail asks her for all the information I've asked Sandy to store regarding iPhone:

To: Sandy
Subject: lookup @iPhone

This is the body of the text, Sandy, but it's completely irrelevant because you were off and running as soon as you saw the subject.

And seconds later, I'll get a reply with the results.

I love Sandy because I'm a kindhearted if slightly delusional man who likes to anthropomorphize his inanimate belongings. Er, I mean "because my life pivots around my e-mail and it's a natural way to make sure I'm reminded of appointments, and that I don't lose important info."

And just as with Zenbe and Evernote, I'm in love with its flexibility. Bad or mediocre technology forces you to adapt to it. *Great* technology adapts to you. This is great technology.

Honestly, I'm kind of happy that Apple hasn't wired in notes synchronization into the iPhone and iTunes. I still find the omission baffling, but it means that these great alternatives — which frankly break through the limits of notes and to-do's that you can only access from your desktop mail client — have room to spread their wings and earn their due.

Speaking of baffling: This is one of the more useful chapters in the book and yet the three killer apps I talked about are all free. Should we feel guilty? Are these people drunk on venture-capital funds?

Well, let's just exploit them before they sober up. Anyone who ever said that free software is worth every penny you paid is either an idiot, never used these apps, or was trying to cover an embarrassing lull in the dinner conversation with something he read on a blog once.

He probably forgot the quote and had to ask Sandy to remind him, too.

19

Putting Any Damned File You Want on Your iPhone

The Skim

Why Arbitrary Files Are So Important ▶
E-Mail and Trickery ▶ Using Online Storage Services ▶
The Holy Grail: Storing Files Right on Your iPhone

I write about and review technology for a living. When I refer to "the box of smartphones in my office" I literally mean a box *filled* with smartphones. When a new phone arrives for review and I can't find space for it in the box, I send some of the older loaners back to their manufacturers.

So when I say that I think the iPhone is the best phone out there, that opinion is backed by a certain amount of experience. And when I say that there's one feature found on even the cheapest smartphone that I sorely miss ... well, that's kind of a big deal, too.

And it's so bloody simple: *a memory card slot.* Or failing that, a simple USB connection that mounts the phone's storage on my desktop like any other USB device.

Those things are an open invitation to put stuff on the phone and *use* it. On a Windows Mobile or Symbian or Google Android smartphone, there's *nothing* stopping you from putting a file on the device.

On the iPhone, iTunes and iTunes alone has the authority to install

a file. Which is annoying enough even if it's a video or a music file. It's *doubly* annoying when you're prevented from copying a Word file, or a spreadsheet, presentation, PDF, … files that the iPhone can open and read, no problem. But iTunes has never heard of the things, so there's no built-in way to exploit that feature.

So we need to take things into our own hands. Via tricks, Web services, and third-party software, we can work around this problem and make the iPhone into something much, much more than Apple will let it be.

WHY ARBITRARY FILES ARE SO IMPORTANT

In general, these are tricks for installing arbitrary desktop files on your iPhone. In *practice*, this basic technique lets you do all kinds of cool and useful things.

○ **Play video or audio files without worrying about iTunes's limitations.** I often leave video files at home because putting them on the iPhone takes a bit of planning. First I need to import it into the iTunes library, then I need to tell iTunes I'd like it copied to the device, then I need to sync it over. By copying it manually, I go from a file on my desktop to a file on my iPhone in just one quick step, and it opens and plays with just a single tap.

○ **Play media files that originate from sources other than your home iTunes library.** You're at a friend's house and she's raving about this terrific podcast she's been listening to for the past month. She offers to give you three hours' worth of MP3 files. And you'd love to listen to them on the 90-minute

drive back home, but gee, you didn't happen to bring your iMac with you, so you can't download and sync the files. But no problem: You can copy the files into a folder on your iPhone directly, and play them with just a tap. The iPhone's built-in iPod app doesn't know it's there, but the iPhone OS doesn't care. It sees an MP3 file, you tap to open it, and the iPhone OS plays the file. Simple.

○ **Carry your Microsoft Office files with you and actually use them.** As a journalist, I can leave the house once I've filed my columns, but I'm not *really* free to go until I hear from my editor and I know that everything's A-OK. So before heading out to get a celebratory order of strawberry pancakes, I copy all this week's work into my iPhone. If an editor wants to talk about some changes, I can just tap the right Word file and the text file containing all my notes, and we can talk about the manuscript together. When I have a presentation coming up, I'll copy my Keynote or PowerPoint file to my iPhone. Now, I can rehearse my slides on the plane.

○ **Carry your whole work environment with you on your phone.** Thumb drives are nice, but I forget to take them with me. I never leave the house without my iPhone.

○ **View images at their full resolution.** When you sync images to the iPhone, iTunes scales them down to save space. Well, that's very nice, but what if the file is a detailed map of the labyrinthine college campus you're going to be visiting? The original image shows you buildings, corridors, names. The scaled-down

Figure 19-2
SnagIt can convert your documents to JPEGs that iTunes will happily sync to your phone's picture library.
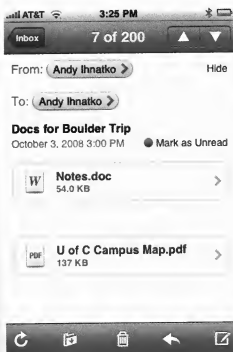
Figure 19-1
E-mail: the simplest way to put files on your iPhone behind iTunes's back

edition is just a purple MIT smudge. When you copy a JPEG to your iPhone manually, it's pixel-for-pixel perfect.

On and on and on.

But the most significant advantage to copying files to my iPhone is the simple fact that *I know they're on my iPhone.* There are lots of cool services for accessing data via the Web or even over the Internet via a neat iPhone app. I'm even going to recommend some of them.

The trouble is, even the 3G network doesn't stretch everywhere. It's not reachable on a plane, and it's not available in many parts of New England, where I live. And when I'm at the front desk of my hotel and

the clerk claims to have no record of my reservation, my confirmation number is no damned use to me on a server in Oregon. I need it to be *there on my iPhone.* Should I just *trust* that I'm going to have 3G reception in every place I need it? What do I do when I'm on a plane?

Etc.

Okay, I sense that you're sold. Let's ease ourselves into this slowly. There are multiple approaches with multiple advantages.

E-MAIL AND TRICKERY

The easiest solution involves no added software or services.

E-Mail It

Yup, just e-mail yourself the documents you want to carry with you. They land in your inbox and you can download and view the actual files with just a tap (see Figure 19-1).

Pros: Dead-simple. And if you manually download the docs, they will stay in memory long after you lose Internet access or put the phone into Airplane Mode.

Cons: You can't *count* on the data sticking around. As soon as the iPhone needs more storage space, it'll purge the data from memory, forcing you to download it all over again. And remember, your inbox can only hold up to 200 messages at a time. If you're

thinking about keeping a copy of your campus map, think again; if you have anything akin to a social life, e-mails from friends will wipe it from the rolls in days.

Hmm. Not a bad thing. We should definitely keep that in mind, but we sort of want *permanence* for some things, don't we? This sort of slaps at the problem.

If we're going to stick to the theme of Solutions That Use Existing iPhone Features ... well, there's *one* type of file that iTunes will happily sync to the iPhone.

Convert Your Documents to Pictures

Yes: photos. If you use a utility (for Windows) or a built-in OS feature (Mac) to "print" your document into a sequence of JPEGs, iTunes can use photo syncing to copy them to the Pictures library, and it'll be none the wiser.

Windows users will need a utility like SnagIt, which is a very keen utility for generating bitmap captures of just about anything that's going on in your PC. One of its many features allows you to create a fake printer that actually converts those virtual pages into JPEGs instead of sending them to a physical printer (see Figure 19-2).

You can buy SnagIt from techsmith.com for $49. Or just download a free 30-day trial edition.

Mac users can use the OS's built-in Save PDF to Folder as JPEG option inside your app's Print dialog. Pick it from the PDF pop-up button in the Print dialog and your pages will land as a pile of JPEGs, ready for iTunes syncing.

Pros: Simple. Documents are copied directly into the iPhone, and they won't ever disappear.

Cons: Only works with document files, not media files. iTunes reduces the resolution of all pictures, so the document pages will be about as readable as a bad fax. But still, readable.

Hmm. Okay, let's move on to the next set of ideas. A good start, but let's get some more muscle into these solutions.

USING ONLINE STORAGE SERVICES

If you want to add storage to a desktop computer, you plug a hard drive into one of its USB ports. But the iPhone doesn't *have* a USB port. And the iPhone is substantially less stylish with a screeching knife tethered to it.

But there are a bunch of services that can give you a *virtual* hard drive, connected not via a three-foot USB cable but via an infinite-length connection to the Internet. You have your own private folder on the service's servers. Your remote storage can hold 1, 5, 15 gigs of files ... the only limit is set by the service. One upstart even promises up to a *terabyte* of storage, which is kind of a lot of data to attach to an iPhone. But the catch is obvious: More storage means a higher monthly service fee.

You can access your network folder a bunch of different ways. They all offer Web browser access that lets you upload, download, and view files, and organize your files into folders. By downloading a little helper app, you can even "mount" your remote folder on your desktop as if it were a local hard drive.

And they all (at least all the ones worth mentioning) have an iPhone interface.

It's sort of an exciting new category and there are plenty of players. There are two
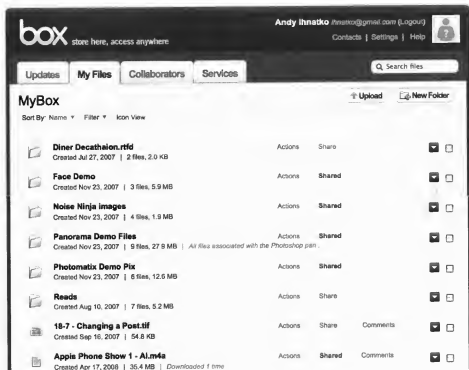
Figure 19-3
Box's Web interface to your networked files

standouts for iPhone users:

Box

Box (box.net) is your straightforward "Give me a folder on the Internet" service. You can get up to 50 gigs of storage, but if you're looking for affordable convenience, their 1GB rate plan is quite affordable (less than a cheese pizza a month).

I like Box's flexibility. When I'm at home, my Box is a plain-vanilla folder attached to my iMac. When I'm in someone else's office and I need to grab a file (or upload something so I can use it on my iPhone later), I use the Web interface (see Figure 19-3).

And the iPhone interface is top-rate. I can

organize my documents and media files by folder, so it's never tough to get my hands on the data I want (see Figure 19-4).

The only inconvenience is that you do have to explicitly copy things into your folders at Box. If your mindset is more along the lines of "I just want to have one folder that follows me around wherever I go," you should turn your attention to the Dropbox service.

Dropbox

Dropbox delivers a new twist. Yes, you can access your files via the Web, like Box. net. But the center of your Dropbox universe is, in fact, the Dropbox folder on your local hard drive.

Figure 19-4
Box's iPhone interface puts up to 50 gigs of files behind your iPhone screen at all times.

Figure 19-5
Dropbox maintains *one* folder online and on each of your desktops, and keeps them all in sync with each other.

It's just a folder. A physical folder on your desktop drive. Drag a file into it and the file will be physically copied to your local folder. But! It will *also* be uploaded to the corresponding location in an identical folder on your Dropbox account. Special software for Windows and Mac OS keeps every Dropbox folder on every one of your computers in constant sync.

Yes, this means that when I copy a manuscript file to my MacBook's Dropbox, it soon winds up in the Dropbox of my iMac back at the office, my Windows notebook in my home office, and the central Dropbox. If I make a change to the online Dropbox—

I upload a file, say—then that file winds up in all the corresponding Dropboxes as well.

Check out the service at getdropbox.com. And check the iPhone interface that comes up when you access that URL via mobile Safari (see Figure 19-5).

Tale of the Tape

Both Box and Dropbox have the same disadvantage: You *still* need to have access to the Internet in order to access your files. Hmm.

But they offer a huge advantage: They let you expand the storage of your device by tens of gigabytes. My iPhone has 16 gigs of

Figure 19-6
Watching an MP4 video hosted on my Dropbox, not stored on my iPhone

storage. There might be as many as *30 gigs* worth of movies, music, photos, and other files that I'd *sort* of like to be able to access via my iPhone 3G, but if I used them all, I'd have no space for last night's podcasts and data that I desperately need.

Amazingly, having a file on a remote service is darned near as good as having it locally on your device. You can even stream video. Take my word for it, but the video in Figure 19-6 is being streamed via Wi-Fi from my Dropbox.

And that's perfect for those family videos that take up hundreds of megabytes and that you're not likely to be watching for your own solo amusement. So they're not worth tak-

ing up precious iPhone storage space. But when talk around the dinner table turns to kids and nephews, boy, you're sure glad you tucked a copy of the kids' baseball game on your online folder for safekeeping.

There are practical limitations, of course. Files are always quick and fluid, and you can count on listening to audio files via even a first-generation EDGE connection. But streaming video requires 3G at the very least, and as a practical matter, you do need to be on Wi-Fi.

If you're choosing between Box and Dropbox: Get Box for simple online storage. Get Dropbox if you'd like the additional convenience of having one common folder shared by every device in your stable.

The overall advice on online storage:

Pros: It can double, triple, or quadruple the amount of effective storage on your iPhone or iPod Touch. It can host any kind of file on the planet. One tap and the iPhone will download and view the file, if it's a compatible format. You can add files to your online folder from anywhere, with any device.

Cons: When you don't have an Internet connection, you don't have access to your files. And the constant chatter between the iPhone and the Internet makes this a slow solution.

The holy grail, of course, is the ability to physically put photos, audio, video, and documents *right on the iPhone itself.* I'm not saying this isn't *possible,* but you'll be paying a terrible price:

$6.99.

Wait, that's not so terrible after all …

THE HOLY GRAIL: STORING FILES RIGHT ON YOUR IPHONE

The greatest solution — I swear, a piece of

Figure 19-7
Air Sharing, the perfect solution to putting any damned file you want on your iPhone

Figure 19-8
No need to check the shipping box for Air Sharing's installation instructions

software that will re-invent your iPhone — is a native file manager app.

These apps combine two features:

❍ When activated, they turn your iPhone into a networked file server. This is a slightly technical way of saying "Desktop computers can 'see' the iPhone as a storage device, and read and write files." No wires, no cables; it's all done via Wi-Fi.

❍ The app acts as a file browser and launcher for the files that have been copied to the iPhone. Tap on a movie file, and it plays. Tap on a Microsoft Word file, and you can read it. Et cetera. Every item on the wishlist that started this

chapter is within reach with a terrific file manager like Air Sharing, available for $6.99 from the App Store. It's made by Avatron Software (avatron.com) if you're interested.

It's my favorite because it's the most reliable of the half-dozen or more you'll find on the App Store ... and by far the easiest to set up.

Activating Air Sharing on Your Local Network

The Air Sharing app is completely inert when it's not running. None of your PCs or Macs will be able to see or access it until you launch the app and "mount" the phone on your desktop as a shared folder.

Note the URL at the bottom of Figure

19-7. That's the network address your computer uses to find your iPhone on the local Wi-Fi network.

Typical of the amount of care and thought that went into Air Sharing is the fact that *detailed* step-by-step directions for mounting the iPhone as a shared folder are hard-wired right in the app. Just tap the ? (question mark) at the bottom of the screen and you'll see instructions for Windows XP, Vista, Mac, and Linux (see Figure 19-8).

At the end of these two or three steps, a new shared folder appears on your desktop. It's your iPhone, and there's no difference between this shared folder and any other folder you've ever worked with. Figure 19-9 shows you what my iPhone looks like to Windows XP; Figure 19-10 shows what it looks like to a Mac.

Some random notes on the setup:

○ Your iPhone isn't tethered to any one machine. If you're staying with friends, you can mount your iPhone on their PC as easily as you connected it to your
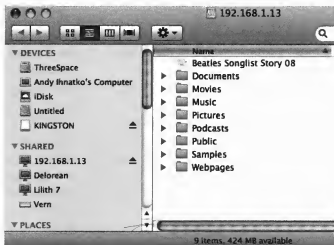
Figure 19-9
My iPhone, as it appears to Windows XP …
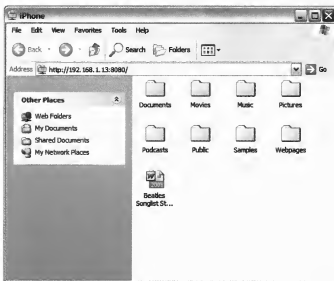
Figure 19-10
… and here's what it looks like when I'm using it with my Mac.

home Mac.

○ The connection stays active only so long

as the app stays active. If you switch to a different app, or if the iPhone goes to sleep, the connection disappears. Something to consider if you plan to copy 1.3 gigabytes of movie files to your iPhone.

○ Your file storage is a special, separate area from all other parts of your iPhone experience. For instance, you won't be able to use this app to copy music to or from your iPhone's music library.

○ For a bit of extra security, you can password-protect the Air Sharing directory so that strangers — strangers who have seen the secret URL on your screen, or are handy with a network analyzer — can't secretly connect up your iPhone and see your files.

Using the Air Sharing File Browser

Like I said, copying and manipulating files on the iPhone is the boring half of this app's functionality. It's when you're gadding about the metropolis that Air Sharing shines.

Just navigate through folders. Want to view a Word document that you copied to your special Hybrid Fish Ocelot Project folder? Tap the folder to open it and then tap the Word document to view it. Want to watch a video? Tap the video and it starts playing. Ditto for audio files.

It's as if you've created a whole second smartphone within the iPhone. Because none of the other iPhone apps can see or interact with the content you've copied into that folder or its sub-folders, Air Sharing is the place you go to play with files and media that you're keeping secret from the rest of the phone.

Reading and playing these files isn't exactly the business of Air Sharing. Actually, it hands

that task off to the iPhone's built in media player.

So what kinds of files can be viewed?

Document types: Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint; Apple Pages, Keynote; Adobe PDF; text.

Web formats: HTML, Web Archive files created by the Mac edition of Safari.

Video formats: MPEG-4, H.264.

Audio formats: AAC, Apple Lossless, MP3 (including music encoded with variable bit rates), WAV, Audible, AIFF.

Image formats: JPEG, GIF, TIFF.

If any of these files won't open properly, check to make sure that you've used the standard filename extension (such as .gif or .mp4) in the filename. If you have a movie file that's named "Awesomemovie.totally" instead of "Awesomemovie.mp4," it's possible that the iPhone's built-in viewer won't know what to do with it.

The fact that I spent a year *without* Air Sharing's ability to carry and view arbitrary files with me is probably a good sign of how much I love the iPhone. I've had project managers killed for omitting less-obvious features than that one.

Truly, it's the best $6.99 you'll ever spend. It transforms the iPhone in a simple but wonderful way. The best way to explain it is to cite an old George Carlin routine.

He described your house as nothing more than "a place for your stuff." When you go on vacation to Maui for a couple of weeks, you need to pack a *smaller* version of your stuff. Then a friend of yours suggests that you spend the weekend at the beach house of a friend of his, so you fill a knapsack with an *even tinier* version of your stuff. Et cetera.

The key to my happiness and security as a nerd is the ability to keep creating smaller

and smaller versions of my digital world.

On my desk in the office, I have the big, quad-core big-screen desktop machine with 2 terabytes of attached storage: my stuff. My MacBook here in the living room is a smaller version of "my stuff."

So what happens when I'm headed someplace and I just don't want to bring a computer with me?

Of course, "no computer" is translated in my head as "*some* kind of computer, certainly." The iPhone, equipped with Air Sharing, lets me create probably the smallest acceptable version of "my stuff." I have my e-mail, I have the Web … and I also have a gigabyte or two of files from my desktop to read, amuse, edit, and just surround myself with a slight static-y feeling of security.

Don't ask me why I need to have an eight-year-old manuscript of a novel I stopped thinking about three years ago. There's no sensible answer and the one I make up wouldn't make me look very good. I'm just grateful to have a working solution.

20

Picture That

The Skim

Moving Pictures ▶ Photo Library Software ▶
A Better Place Solution: Flickr ▶ When Details Matter

Oh, what a paradise the world must have been back in 1861. Yes, the country was beset with strife and would soon be rent in two by the bloodiest war in American history. Oh, and routine pandemics of cholera, a child mortality rate that's mind-boggling by any standard, total lack of any sort of middle class plus a lower class that had the rights, opportunities, and overall quality of life as medieval serfs. Right, good points.

What makes me slightly fond for those days was the fact that getting a family picture taken required people to travel quite a long distance, spend about three months' worth of wages, and convince their children to sit for eight minutes with their bodies kept rock-still by iron frames that screwed onto bones.

As a result, you didn't tend to be accosted with these things back in those days. Maybe twice a year. I may be a twisted little misanthrope, but even *I* can fake a smile and say "Ohhh, isn't she *adorable!*" in reaction to two photos, particularly when spaced several months apart.

Even in the 20th century, things weren't *too* bad. Sure, you could get tricked into sitting through a vacation slideshow. *Once.* But once bitten, twice shy: As soon as you followed your host into the rec room and saw that there was a cover on the pool table and a screen erected on the wall across from the sofa, you were wise enough to deliver a sharp elbow to

his solar plexus and flee through the kitchen while he's scrabbling on the floor and dealing with double-vision.

We have all been completely screwed by digital photography. New parents can shoot hundreds of pictures a *day*. And devices like the iPhone and the iPod Touch mean that they're all loaded into their pockets *automatically*, ready to be inflicted upon an innocent bystander like yourself at a moment's notice without even the pretense of remorse.

I urge you folks to use this feature cautiously. And if (like me) you don't have kids of your own, I suggest that you use this feature in a defensive capacity. "I'd *love* to see that 238-photo slideshow of little Tiffaz's fourth-grade graduation," you can say, unholstering your own iPhone. "But first, wouldn't you like to see some photos of my father's recent bile duct surgery?"

MOVING PICTURES

Normally, iTunes is the warehouse that holds all your iPhone and iPod Touch's potential inventory. But there's a snag. iTunes happily will manage your music and your videos and, although it's charitably willing to acknowledge the existence of these things known as "pictures," it's not willing to store or organize them for you.

So iTunes offers you a Willy Wonka Land-like assortment of colorful options and features for loading music and videos onto your device. When it comes to pictures all you can do is tell iTunes where, specifically, to get those photos and how you'd like them stored on your device.

It's bleak and rainy as I write this, so to keep my own spirits up I shall continue the Wonka metaphor by describing the (by now familiar) iPhone Options window as

the big colorful candyland area at the start of the chocolate river that Augustus Gloop tumbles into at the start of the picture (see Figure 20-1). Like the fabled movie set, this window is central to the entire operation. Also, it allows us to pause for a moment and envision Gummy Bears that are as big as Yorkshire terriers.

You can open your iPhone or iPod Touch's options by just clicking its name in iTunes's Devices list.

Click the Photos tab to fiddle with photo settings. By default, the Synchronize Photos From feature is unchecked, meaning that iTunes won't bother slapping pictures onto your device.

Click the checkbox to turn on photo synchronization. Then, you need to tell iTunes where to synchronize photos. This boils down to two choices:

- *A spiffy, handy-dandy, nicely organized formal photo library.* Managed by a slick application that slurps pictures straight from your camera and slaps baby pictures into printed calendars faster than your friends can throw them away.

- *Any old folder.* Which is just what you think it means. You point iTunes at a folder and zap, pictures in the folder become pictures on your device, automagically.

PHOTO LIBRARY SOFTWARE

Clearly this is the smoothest way to go, because that's how you naturally tend to organize your pictures on your computer. The simplest and most brainless way of managing photos on an iPhone or iPod Touch is to just let your photo library do most of the heavy lifting for you.

The bad news is that the relationship

between iTunes and a photo library manager is a fairly intimate one and as such, iTunes won't work with just *any* application. If you're using a Mac, well, you're definitely going to want to use iPhoto. It came with your computer, it works well, and when you plug anything that even *smells* like a digital camera into your Mac, the OS has already been configured to automatically hand the microphone off to iPhoto and cue up a Tony Bennett record, so to speak.

On the Windows side, it's a bad news/exceptionally good news situation. PCs don't all ship with the same library app, and furthermore, there isn't *one* insanely popular app that everybody uses (like iPhoto). But the fab news is that Adobe has a terrific photo library manager called Adobe Photoshop Elements. It's a "junior" edition of Photoshop with a bodacious collection of editing and organizational tools, including a photo library manager.

It's a commercial product, but it's cheap. And if "cheap" is too much money for you, Adobe also offers a free (free, free) app that's just a photo library manager and a basic editor: Adobe Photoshop Album Starter Edition. You can download it from adobe.com.

Whether you're using a PC or a Mac, an Adobe product, iPhoto, or some other library manager, all "eligible" photo apps will appear in the pop-up menu of iTunes's photo settings panel.

Any Old Folder

If you're one of those personalities that has trouble ceding authority, you can tell iTunes to sync pictures from any folder attached to your computer instead. The Choose Folder option is straightforward enough that I'm only going to haul out the numbered-list

Figure 20-1
Setting your iPhone's photo preferences

format because I set up my word processor with a special button that generates them automatically:

1. Select Choose Folder from the pop-up list.
2. Navigate to the folder you'd like iTunes to synchronize from, and click OK.

Charitably enough, iTunes populates this pop-up list with your OS's most likely spot for storing pictures: My Pictures for the Windows kids, and Pictures for the Mac gang. But it can be any directory that your machine can see even a remote folder on a network that everyone in the office uses as a collective photo dump.

Getting More Specific

By default, iTunes selects the Copy All Photos and Albums, which means it'll attempt to copy the whole kit and caboodle, as well as the horses they rode into town on. This is a Good Thing if you have no heart whatsoever, and you honestly believe that you're going to find a willing audience for (good Lord) 8,963 of your personal photos.

I mean, honestly. You're already pushing it with just thirty or forty. There's maybe one good reason for making somebody sit

through a slide show of hundreds or thousands of pictures, and even if you *do* find yourself in that sort of position, you can usually get a confession out of the prisoner a lot faster by simply dropping your iPhone into a sock and beating him with it. Which would *still* get you in trouble with the World Court as well as Karma, so that's just another reason why you'd want to pare down the number of photos on your device.

There are more obvious reasons, of course. Photos take up space on your iPhone that could be filled with Dan Fogelberg music (though again: the iPhone-in-a-sock technique is both a more effective means of torture and considered to be more humane as well).

Plus, lots of photos will cost you lots of time. iTunes has to prep and copy each one of those pictures. Go ahead and show up late for work with your hair and teeth unbrushed. Explain to your boss that you missed your train because it took iTunes ten minutes to update your iPhone this morning with the 320 photos you shot of your dog trying to do his little trick last night. See if *that* sort of attitude helps you get your name on the corporate letterhead.

Unless my advice means nothing to you, click the Copy Selected Albums/Folders Only button to tell iTunes to only copy a subset of your picture collection to the iPhone during each sync.

Good: I'm glad my words are sinking in. Whether you're syncing to a photo library or to a folder, iTunes offers you the same option for selecting elements of your picture collection. The list (see Figure 20-1, *otro vez*) contains all the photo albums in your photo library, or all the subfolders inside the folder you picked.

Select as few or as many of these as you like by clicking their checkboxes.

You can also drag these items around to change their order, whether you're syncing every folder or album or just a few selected items. Selected albums/folders nearer to the top of the list will be synchronized before the ones at the bottom. This is a big deal if (if?! more like *when*) your iPhone or iPod Touch is running low on free space.

See, iTunes doesn't even *pretend* that it loves pictures the same way it loves music and videos. Dr. Phil would have a *fit* if he learned about this poisonous family dynamic. When iTunes syncs your device, it first copies all the tunes and vids and only then does it grudgingly fill any leftover space with pictures.

So if you care about which pix wind up on your device and which ones might get left behind, put the most important albums and photos at the top. My iPhone is usually set to sync the following albums, in this order:

1. An album of must-haves — the pictures that I always want to have on my device, no matter what (you think I'm going to leave the house without the photo of me and the "Time to make the donuts" guy from the Dunkin' Donuts commercial? As if).

2. A smart album that always contains the 36 photos that have been added to the library most recently.

3. Whatever albums reflect recent family events and other cool news that are likely to come up in conversation.

4. Comic books. What, you didn't know that you could use your iPhone or iPod Touch as a comic book reader? Sounds to me like you skipped over Chapter 8.

5. Everything else. This is why I always
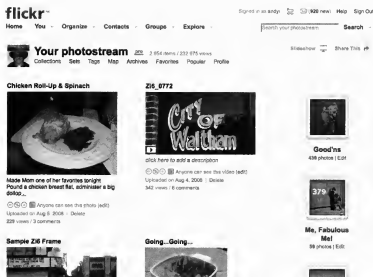
Figure 20-2
Break through storage problems and add lots of photo features beside, by using Flickr as your photo viewer.

check All Photos and Albums. What's the point of carrying around an iPhone or iPod Touch that has *empty space* left on it? That's anathema to the glorious mission of this book. Because photos are always the last things to be synced, this means that it'll fill up the remaining megabytes with whatever's available.

So I get the best of both worlds. If last weekend's Newport Chowder Cook-Off happens to come up in conversation, it's likely that I can whip out a photo of my friend John and his stack of 40 empty cups to convince any doubters. And a man who walks with a photo of himself sitting in the Batmobile, even one taken three years ago, walks with quiet power and serenity.

I have the new pix and the important pix, and I leave the rest at home. Not coincidentally, I still have friends who are willing

to hang out with me and who don't mind terribly if I bring out my handheld and start scrolling through pictures.

Cool. Now we've discussed all you need to know about Apple's solutions for putting photos on your iPhone. Now let's move straight on to "why Apple's methods suck, and how to improve upon them."

A BETTER PLACE SOLUTION: FLICKR

Suckage #1: Photos can take up a lot of room. You're not tempted to be *very* ambitious about syncing photos to your phone.

Result: The opportunity to seize the focus of dinner-table conversation and run off with it like a golden retriever passes you by, because your photos of your VIP backstage tour of the Yakov "What a country!" Smirnof theater in Branson, Missouri, are back home

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on your desktop hard drive, where they can delight and thrill nobody.

Which is why Flickr is a wonderful online service for anybody who shoots lots of photos. Get into the habit of uploading anything worth keeping to Flickr.com. If a meteor should strike your home computer, your pix are safely archived a thousand miles away. Your photos are never farther away than the nearest computer with an Internet connection and a Web browser.

And private photos are kept private. If you want the world to see that photo of you with George Lucas — good choice, cropping it high so that nobody sees the pee stain in your trousers — you can share it with the world. You can e-mail photos to your Flickr photo roll directly from your iPhone, copy them with a plug-in for your favorite Windows or Mac photo manager, or via any Web browser (see Figure 20-2).

This ain't a book about Flickr but, yeah, I'm a huge fan. I'm convinced that Flickr has
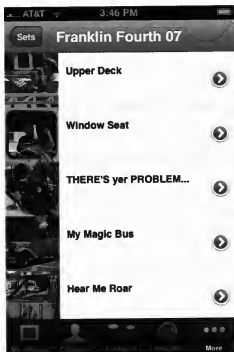
Figure 20-3
Exposure, your iPhone dashboard into Flickr

made me a more enthusiastic and conscientious photographer.

For *our* purposes, all you need to know is that it's far more than an online photo album service. Because once your photos are in your account, you can access them via any means that's convenient ... including a third-party app on your iPhone. Figure 20-3 shows off one of the better Flickr apps: Exposure, from Connected Flow.

I can easily access all my most recent pix, browse my photo albums, even take a look at the photos that have recently been posted by my friends. And if I have my iPhone's Location Services turned on, I can touch a button and instantly be checking out dozens of pho-

Figure 20-4
Try the French onion soup; it's homemade.

tos that other Flickr users shot right in this neighborhood. I use that feature when I'm in a strange city and wondering what's interesting. Tapping that button is an answer to the question "Is there anything nearby that's so interesting that somebody just had to take a picture of it?"

WHEN DETAILS MATTER

Suckage #2: iTunes downsamples your photos when it syncs them to your iPhone. This is a very bad thing, and the person who came up with the idea should be punished.

Take a look at Figure 20-4. This is a shot of the Miss Worcester Diner in Worcester, Massachusetts. On my desktop, it's big, bold, and beautiful, chock-full of details.

But then you sync it to your iPhone and

show it off to a pal, and Figure 20-5 shows (for the love of Pete) what you see when you go to maximum zoom.

I mean, it's perfectly adequate for casually showing off a snapshot or two. But what if the photo is actually, you know, *useful*? What if the picture isn't just a snapshot of the Christmas tree but a detailed map of the campus and your only hope of finding Room 26-103 in Building E? What if you're trying to explain to the nice person at the home center that no, the fitting on the valve looks more like a doohickey than a thingamabob?

More likely: What if "Josh is the fourth blob from the left in the third row" won't do and you'd rather that the kid's grandma can see him in his full Class Winter Chorale glory?

Well, the best solution is to dispense with

Figure 20-5
Not so much a "Zoom" as a "Zo."

Figure 20-6
Now that's not "Zoom." It's "Zoooooooom-mmmmm!"

dreds of family photos on your phone should be used for *good*, not *evil*. I should also clarify that I'm not hostile toward your showing me pictures of your kids, friends, or the high-ticket consumer items that are currently acting as shabby substitutes for same.

I encourage you to bring 'em out *after* you've filled me with barbecue and *before* you've brought out the pies. I'm already in a genial and grateful mood.

And there's also the chance that if I refuse to show proper enthusiasm for your photo-essay of the time little Bonfiglio and Isolde made a bust of Herman Melville out of lawn clippings, I might not get any pie.

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E-Mail

The Skim

Giving Your iPhone Its Own E-Mail Account ▶
Pish-Push, MobileMe ▶ Turning E-Mails Into Podcasts

As a little kid in school, I *prayed* that every social interaction could be like e-mail.

"Is this seat taken?" Ann Malloy asked me in the lunchroom on the first day of fourth grade. If she'd e-mailed me about it, I'd be reading it on my sofa, or maybe while having a bowl of Frosted Flakes you know, a place where I feel safe and secure. I could read and re-read it over and over again to try to evaluate every possible meaning from those four words, and work out every possible *response,* and then evaluate every possible response that *she* could make to my response. And a cozy three hours later, I'd finally click Send on the draft I'd been working on all morning.

As things were, I think I blurted out, "If you're worried about the pee smell, it wasn't me; I think it was that kid in the Patriots jersey who just left."

You see why I'm rather fond of this alternative method of communication. And with my iPhone in my pocket, if I want to strike up a conversation with a girl at a party all I need to do is walk up to her say, "Can I please have your e-mail address? I'd like to hit on you, but I'd prefer to do so from a safe distance."

Both the iPhone and the iPod Touch have a wonderful e-mail client built-in. That's covered. Apple has also thoughtfully prevented any

TROUBLE

Question: Where did my messages go?!?

Answer: I dunno. Did you check the pants you were wearing yesterday?

Yeah, that's annoying. With the iPhone 2.x operating system, Mail does a *better* job of keeping your downloaded messages than it did under 1.x. Now, there's a very good chance that all 50, 100, 200 messages you've downloaded will still be there even when you're away from an Internet connection.

But there's no explicit feature for telling Mail to please, please (dear God) *please* do not delete a message from the iPhone under any circumstances. If your device runs into a storage crunch, it'll start throwing away message contents and can only show you your flight itinerary if there's Wi-Fi or 3G available.

third-party developers from creating any alternatives to the built-in Mail app, so hey good news! No need to even *learn* about any others!

But there are still a few things to say about enhancing the Mail experience.

GIVING YOUR IPHONE ITS OWN E-MAIL ACCOUNT

The iPhone's built-in mail client is indeed quite nice, but it's by no means a power tool. My inbox has such a great gravitational pull that most of my life tends to orbit around it. I'll be flying to Houston shortly to give a

talk; all the important details of the trip have arrived via e-mail. By the time my trip has rolled around, the confirmations have rolled out of my iPhone's 200-message inbox.

Pinching down the e-mail flow is a particularly big deal when you consider the Pavlovian response you develop to the iPhone's "new mail" sound. You know that your uncle is going to shoot you the stink-eye, but you're bored and you *really* want to know what's just arrived and you didn't really like your cousin all that much and this funeral service is going on for *soooo* long, so you glance at your iPhone and see ... an ad for a product or service that you insist that you don't need. Damn.

But you know you had to look.

My desktop inbox is a firehose. I want my iPhone's inbox to be like that liter of cool water I keep on my belt when I go for those grueling three-quarter-mile hikes. Right there when I need it, delivering the sweet stuff I want.

That's why I have a whole separate e-mail account on my iPhone. It's a free account I signed for it on http://mail.yahoo.com (or, if you prefer, go for a Google Mail account at http://mail.google.com).

I have my desktop mail client set up to automatically filter all my incoming mail. (That *does* mean my computer has to be up and running all the time.) If I get a message from a known friend, someone I work with, or an enemy whom I want to keep close tabs on, my desktop mail app automatically forwards it to my iPhone.

And if I'm reading my desktop mail and I spot a message that's definitely going to come in handy later, I'll forward it to my iPhone mail account manually. Best of all, this approach renders your iPhone bullet-

proof against spam. So long as you never give this e-mail address out to *anybody* — not a single human, not a single Web site, not under *any* circumstances — spammers won't be able to find it.

(Probably. Remember, spammers are jerks fueled by amphetamines and a gnawing hole in their soul where most humans keep their sense of decency.)

Another advantage: I can load up the iPhone's account with info without cluttering up my "real" e-mail address. The last thing I do before heading out for the airport is forward fresh copies of my travel itinerary, meeting data, notes, etc. to the iPhone so they're waiting for me right at the top of my inbox by the time I get to the car.

PISH-PUSH, MOBILEME

"Push e-mail has come to the iPhone! Yes! Awesome! Finally! Took you guys long enough!"

This was the major reaction when Mail 2.0 was announced. How nice. Push e-mail, Yes, indeed. Quite a feather in the ol' caperoo, all right.

Yeah, I couldn't care less. "Push" e-mail — which is part of the mail service you get if you sign up for Apple's MobileMe Internet service — opens a free-flowing pipeline between your inbox and the Internet. (Microsoft's Exchange server does the same thing, and it can "push" to the iPhone now, too.)

Normally, your e-mail is held at a server until Mail contacts that machine and checks for new messages. With a mail service that supports push (and with a properly configured account on your iPhone), that new message slides straight through that machine and into your device, bob's your uncle.

I'm not terribly excited about MobileMe's mail service, nor push in general. The Mail app checks for new messages automatically, as frequently as every 15 minutes. I acknowledge that there are jobs and lifestyles in which getting an e-mail 15 minutes late is the difference between life and death, making a million bucks and rummaging through the seats of your Mercedes for enough gas money to make it home.

I abase myself by reporting that I do not live such a lifestyle.

Push e-mail would be important to me if I were using an e-mail alert to properly time the boiling of a poached egg (3 minutes). As is, well, I'll stick with the mail service I have now.

Plus the mail service I have now *includes* push mail. Want to know why I recommended Yahoo Mail for your free iPhone mail account? Yup: It can push just as aggressively as MobileMe, and it doesn't cost a thing. Google Mail doesn't offer push yet, but it ought to be coming any day now.

To be honest, Push is more of a "here you go, now shut up about it" feature. BlackBerry devices became an immediate hit because they were indeed the first mobile e-mail systems to offer push. And like I said, in some professions, you don't want to burst into the emergency room with a cooler full of ice only to be told, "We were sick and tired of waiting for you, so we gave the liver to someone who was able to show up *five* minutes after we e-mailed, not *fifteen*."

But unless this is you, don't bother.

TURNING E-MAILS INTO PODCASTS

There's another keen little tip that you can use whether you have an iPhone or an iPod

Touch: You can convert your e-mails into spoken-word podcasts automatically.

(Humor me.)

(Look, you've already paid for the book. You might as well just work on reading.)

I receive what I feel is a very manageable volume of e-mail. By the time it's been sorted for me, I can sit and read it and keep up with the flow.

Not everyone is so fortunate. Mail comes in by the double-bucketful, as though you fell on the wrong end of that scene in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, where the magic broomsticks just keep on bringing in more and more buckets of water whether you want 'em to or not.

Problem 2 in your life is that you have a pretty long commute every morning. Problem 3 is that people tend to e-mail you with important stuff at all hours, and Problem 4 is that you really need to arrive at the office with a game plan for the day, knowing in advance what you need to dread.

Problems 5 through 7's names are Louise, Kelly, and Michael, and they tend to demand

to be dressed and breakfasted by their loving parent during time that you could be spending reading overnight mail.

You also don't rate a company car and driver. So reading e-mails while you drive is medically contra-indicated.

(Criminy. It sucks to be you. Do you have a five-year plan? Because every time I hear people talk about jobs like this, they then tell Oprah how you finally had enough, quit the 9-to-5, opened a cupcake shop in Peterboro, New Hampshire, and now find themselves atop an international baking empire. Something to think about.)

Well, there's a slick tool — available in both Mac and PC editions — that can take your incoming mail and automatically convert them to smooth, natural-sounding human speech. It's called iAudioize. It's 40 bucks and it's produced by MagneticTime (magnetictime.com). Head on over there and download a free, functioning demo.

Both editions of the app work in the same general fashion, with a few individual quirks.

After you've installed the iAudioizeE-mail Pics, you'll find that there's a new mail folder (MagneticTime for Outlook, iAudioize for Mac Mail. This is the mail folder that iAudioizer will grab messages from; anything that lands in this folder will ultimately be processed into spoken text.

For this reason, you'll want to use Outlook or Mail's Rules feature to define the types of e-mails that should be redirected or copied into this folder. I'm angry enough as it is when I just have to read the subject lines of spam; if I'm forced to listen to the heartbreaking letter of a cancer-stricken Nigerian oil prince, well, no good can come of it.

So set up rules that fill this special folder just with mail that you know are important

Figure 21-1
The magic button
that sends your
speakable e-mail
from Outlook to
iAudioizer
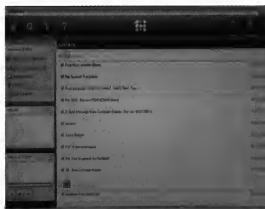
Figure 21-2
E-mails are lined up in iAudioizer and are ready
to be transmogrified.

Figure 21-3
E-mails wait in
iAudioizer's queue
until you click the
Export button.

and worthy of your attention during your commute or daily jog. You can also drag e-mail in there manually.

The process for converting these e-mails differs between PC and Mac. On the PC:

1. Click the iAudioize button in your Outlook toolbar when the iAudioizer was installed (see Figure 21-1). The messages will be moved into iAudioizer's main window for processing (see Figure 21-2). They'll appear in a tidy list, complete with subject lines so you can get a sense of what you're about to convert.

2. Uncheck any e-mail that you don't want to have converted.

3. Click the iPod button in the top-right corner of the window to convert all of these e-mails into MP3s and send them into your iTunes library (see Figure 21-3).

Things are actually a bit simpler on the Mac. The Mac iAudioizer app automatically checks Mail's iAudioizer folder for new mes-

sages, and copies them into its own main window without you clicking any buttons. Figure 21-4 shows you a batch of messages lined up in iAudioizer, awaiting processing.

1. Switch over to the iAudioizer app. All the e-mails that were directed to your iAudioizer folder appear in the list.

2. Remove any messages that you don't want to convert by selecting them and then clicking the Remove button at the bottom of the window.

3. Click the Export button to convert your e-mails to audio files and send them into your iTunes library.

No matter which version you used, the result is the same: a stack of individual MP3 files in your iTunes library. By default, they'll be organized into a new playlist called iAudioize-E-mails. iAudioize tags its files by setting the Artist to iAudioize. So it's quite easy to build an iTunes Smart Playlist that chooses just the e-mails that have been received within the past day, for instance.

E-mail is your shadow. The faster you run

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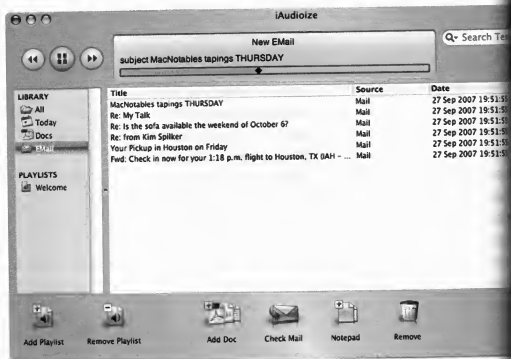
Figure 21-4
Mac messages awaiting conversion

from it, the faster it follows you and the longer the day gets, the longer your inbox seems to be.

But once you accept it as a fact of life (like "nothing halfway good on TV on Wednesday night") and bring a little creativity to your approach, you'll find ways to bend e-mail to your will.

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Spreadsheets and Databases

The Skim

Google Docs ☞ EditGrid ☞ Onward to Databases

Databases are the Brazil nuts of the iPhone Supported Data Types Mixed Fancy Cocktail Nuts Assortment. Ignored, unloved, chucked at your little brother when no other means of communicating the sentiment "I don't care whose turn it is; you can have the Wii when I'm done with it, and not before" seems to be working.

At least in the eyes of the iPhone development team. They included great support for Microsoft Word and Excel documents: If someone e-mails one of those things to you, or if you encounter a link to same on a Web page, it'll open and display the doc, no sweat.

But you're on your own with database information. That's a real shame, given how much corporate and even personal data is managed by database apps. You can see their logic, though. I have my favorite database app (FileMaker Pro for both PC and Mac) but in truth there are four or five popular formats and there's no 900-pound-gorilla in the category.

So if you want to carry your comic book collection with you — huh? Your boss is watching and you put this book on your expense account?

Oh, sorry … sorry.

If you're trying to maximize your lead conversion percentage and hit all your targets by maintaining up-to-date metrics of client and lead

data from your company's bid database, you'll have to massage the data yourself.

GOOGLE DOCS

First, let's talk about the Favored Son of the two: Spreadsheets. If all you want to do is *view* a spreadsheet, well, that's no trouble at all. The iPhone has a built-in viewer for spreadsheets. If you just e-mail yourself a copy of the .xls file (or use any of the other techniques in Chapter 19 to access it), you can just tap on the file and your iPhone will let you view and navigate its contents (see Figure 22-1).

There you go. Simple and sweet. The other way to make spreadsheet data viewable on your iPhone is to use the (free) Google Docs service. Google Docs is a suite of business and productivity software that Google hosts as a Web service instead of as a desktop app. Once you've logged into your Google account and accessed http://docs.google.com from any Web browser, you're presented with a nifty browser interface to all your Office

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Figure 22-1
The Simple Way: viewing a spreadsheet with the iPhone's built-in viewer

TIDBIT

There are a handful of areas in which this book has to advise you "Please check the iTunes App Store" and this, my friends, is one of them. As I write this, the App Store has been open for a few months and we've still yet to see

a single decent database or spreadsheet app. The best the iPhone developer community has to offer is a brain-dead 64-cell spreadsheet that appears to have been written solely to win a bar bet, and a database app that shows some promise but is more of a work-in-progress.

By the time this book has

been out for six months to a year, there simply have to be some decent spreadsheet and database apps. I mean, I'm happy to show the early adopters how to do just as well with online apps — makes me feel as though I'm earning my keep, you know — but as a user ... *I want my database app!!!*
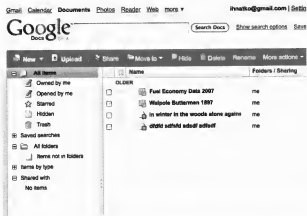
Figure 22-2
Google Docs: accessing your
Office docs from anywhere
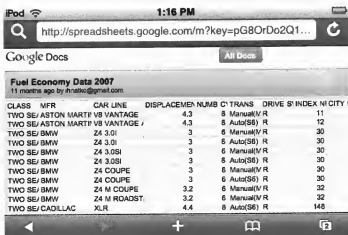
Figure 22-3
Google Docs's
iPhone interface

documents (see Figure 22-2).

You can click the Upload button and copy any Office document from your desktop into Google Docs. Or, as the Google Gods intended, you can click New, create and edit new docs right within the browser environment, and thus thumb the nose at Microsoft altogether.

Google has some delightfully aggressive iPhone support all the way across the board, and Google Docs is no exception. If you access the same htttp://docs.google.com

URL via the iPhone's browser, the service presents its pretty little iPhone face (see Figure 22-3).

And your entire desktop Google Docs environment is faithfully reinterpreted for the small screen. Tap on anything to view it.

Goole Docs has a leg up on the "e-mail myself a spreadsheet" solution, particularly if you happen to use Google Docs as your desktop office productivity suite too. You never have to consciously think, "Oh, I'll *need* this spreadsheet; I'd better e-mail it

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to myself before I shut down my desktop machine and head for the airport." Google Docs is docs is docs; you have one folder of documents and the ability to access that folder from anywhere. Those files will be there safe and sound until two days before Armageddon.

(And be fair: You're entitled to knock off work and take the kids to a ballgame the weekend before all Creation is destroyed in the fires of vengeful woe.)

One hitch, though: You still can't *edit* that spreadsheet. And the big deal about spreadsheets is that they're living, changing bits of software. This is a fab solution if you just want access to a table of information. But if you need to make *calculations* based on that

Figure 22-4
EditGrid: *real* spreadsheets on the iPhone

info — or if you actually want to edit things — you're still out of luck.

EDITGRID

Now, if you truly want to open, read, *and* create *and edit (!)* spreadsheets on your iPhone, you're gonna want to head to Edit-Grid.com and sign up for an account.

EditGrid has the same basic M.O. as Google Docs (just talking about the spreadsheet here). It's an online app that stores all your data on a remote server (whether you've created it in EditGrid or just uploaded it from your desktop) and runs through any Web browser. EditGrid has thrown all its eggs into the Spreadsheet basket, and this commitment to Doing One Thing Perfectly really shows through when you open one of your EditGrid documents on your iPhone, by plugging iphone.editgrid.com into your browser (see Figure 22-4).

It's ambitious. It's truly an incredible thing of beauty. EditGrid is possibly one of the prettiest Safari-based apps for the iPhone, full-stop; the fact that it's doing something as sophisticated as running a real spreadsheet through a Web browser ups the awesome into the giga-Elvis spectrum. I'll even go so far as to say that a native iPhone app would do well to simply duplicate the features and sophistication of EditGrid's Web-based solution.

You can create new documents. You can edit data, build new formula, and perform calculations and recalculations. It even charts! Look upon these works, ye unworthies, and despair!

Sorry. What I mean is that although it sort of stings that the App Store has been open for a few months as I write this and a single native spreadsheet app has *yet* to appear …

Figure 22-5
Turning database info into table data, which can then become a spreadsheet

well, so long as you have a connection to the Internet, EditGrid will serve you just fine.

ONWARD TO DATABASES

I'll begrudgingly cut the iPhone development team some slack for not including a database reader. There are just so many conflicting formats. And databases are more like live, complicated programs than simple, static mounds of data.

The best solution for taking your database data with you, then, is to transmogrify its data into a simple table, so that it becomes a spreadsheet.

Every database app lets you export data into generic text-file formats in which every record in the database is a separate line and each record is separated by a tab, or a comma (which is why that specific flavor is called

CSV — or comma-separated values.

You then import this data into your spreadsheet app and save it as an Excel sheet. Many databases can even export your data directly into an Excel file, so you don't need to do any sort of conversion at all. Once you have a spreadsheet file, you can open and read it using whatever technique strikes your fancy, be it the iPhone or iPod Touch's built-in reader or a great online app like EditGrid.

Figure 22-5 shows what Microsoft Access's CSV export wizard looks like. You select the fields that you'd like the exported file to contain and it spits out a text file.

I'm not sure, but this *might* be the un-hippest part of the entire book. I've seen all of Apple's iPhone ads and I don't think they've ever chosen to have a silhouette of a person at a desk comparing third-quarter actuals

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to projections, while techno music pulses through the speakers and a psychedelic display zaps all around the background.

Yes, spreadsheets and databases are dull. But they can bring you something that all the music and video can't:

Okay, I'm stuck.

But the good news is that if you're required to have access to these mounds of boring data, it lashes you to a notebook computer like the unfortunate cashboxes of Mr. Jacob Marley. He didn't seem too happy about it. Lots of moaning and bewailing, as I recall. You'd better believe that if he had the option of commuting to his hauntings carrying nothing more than an iPhone in his musty pocket, he'd have snapped at it.

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23

Presentations

The Skim

PowerPoint and Keynote ▶
Converting a PowerPoint Presentation ▶
Converting a Keynote Presentation

"**O**pening a virtually untapped market, thanks to leveraging our vertical distribution paradigm across the manufacturing and actualization domains. With just US$4.2 million in startup capitalization, fanning to US$12.8 million over nine quarters with GMM linked to a platformed derivative, we're confident that your VC investment in MartekLan will be one of the biggest success stories of the year.

"But don't take my word for it; we have all the breakdowns for you in a series of slides. Now, if you'll all just scoot in realllll close, I'll be using my phone's screen for the presentation. I hope none of you have a perfume sensitivity because I kind of went nuts with the Drakkar Noir this morning."

Yes, the idea of driving a presentation from your iPhone screen is nuts. Unless you're pitching a new retail and residential development scheme to a county's board of supervisors consisting exclusively of mice.

Until! You look through the offerings at the online Apple Store and discover that for the mere price of $49, you can purchase the iPhone Composite AV Cable. With this baby in your back pocket, your iPhone or iPod Touch can use any standard-def composite screen.

No, it isn't in HD. Well, no, it's not even VGA. Look, you're driving a whole presentation from a *phone*. Be happy that it's in *color!*

Figure 23-1
Telling PowerPoint to transmogrify the whole stack of slides

Putting your presentations on your phone actually makes sense from a couple of different perspectives. Not *everybody* is Al Gore, giving a big-screen presentation in front of 500 magnates, toffs, and others captains of state and industry. Sometimes, you're just headed to the Dover field office to explain how the new photocopier works. On most flights, checked baggage costs $15 an item and overhead bin space is so rare that you practically need to engage in *Lord of the Flies*-style activity just to get space for your laptop bag. Wouldn't you rather board with just your phone, a neatly coiled cable, and a Danielle Steel novel?

And that assumes you're actually going to be *delivering* your presentation from your iPhone. I'm sure that Al Gore had his *Inconvenient Truth* slides on his iPhone and was rehearsing his spiel all through the half-hour taxi ride from the airport to the United Nations.

POWERPOINT AND KEYNOTE

Preparing a PowerPoint or a Keynote presentation for use on an iPhone or iPod Touch is one of those lovely zero-step processes. Now, anyhow.

The first edition of the iPhone operating system couldn't grok that file format, so you needed to convert the presentation file into a different format.

But the iPhone and iPod Touch 2.0 software can handle presentation files as easily as it can handle any other Microsoft Office file. Just use any of the tricks in Chapter 19 to put the file on your device, and a single tap will open it using the iPhone's or iPod Touch's built-in viewer.

As a reminder on how to get those files onto your iPhone or iPod Touch:

○ Use a third-party utility like Veiosoft's DataCase (veiosoft.com) to install the file directly into the iPhone's onboard storage.

○ Use network storage services like Dropbox (getdropbox.com) or Box (box.net) to store it in a folder that you can access online.

○ Just e-mail it to yourself as a file attachment.

The trouble with the latter solution is that it relies on an Internet connection. If you want to run through your slides on a plane (or pitch to the slightly drunk venture capitalist sitting next to you), you're out of luck. The problem with the first one: you need to have thought of this and planned ahead of time.

DataCase (or another iPhone app that lets you install files directly on the device) is the best solution to any problem involving a need to have access to certain data regardless of your location. But there's another way: iTunes won't copy your presentation file to your iPhone, but it *will* copy it over if you convert your slides to JPEGs and sync it as a photo album, using the standard photo syncing technique.

And you don't need any extra software to pull off that trick either. Both PowerPoint

Figure 23-2
A big happy pile of JPEG slides

and Keynote can do that conversion for you in just a couple of steps.

CONVERTING A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

To convert a PowerPoint presentation to JPEGs:

1. Choose File ▶ Save As.
2. From the Save as Type pop-up menu, select JPEG File Interchange Format.
3. Navigate to your My Pictures folder (Windows) or Pictures folder (Mac) as the destination for the JPEGs, just

to keep things tidy, and then click the Save button. Note that Windows PowerPoint will ask you if you want to export the entire presentation, or just the one slide you're looking at right now (see Figure 23-1).

4. Click the Every Slide button. Power-
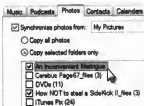
Figure 23-3
Plopping a presentation on your iPhone

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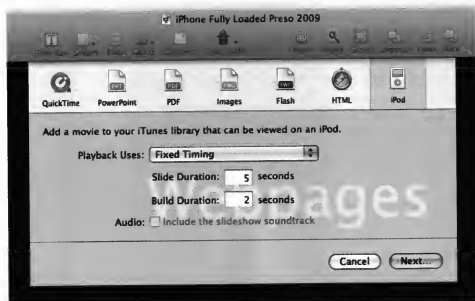
Figure 23-4
Apple Keynote hands off to Apple iTunes and thence to Apple iPhone.

Point will grind its way through every one of your slides. The end result will be a brand-new folder with the exact same title as your presentation file, which will contain a sequence of JPEGs named Slide1, Slide2, Slide3, etc. (see Figure 23-2).

5. Finally, tell iTunes to sync your presentation folder to your iPhone the next time you update the device (see Figure 23-3). Go to Chapter 20 for the complete 411 on loading images on your iPod.

And you're done. The presentation will appear under your iPhone's Photo Albums menu, listed by the name of the folder. So if the title of your presentation is "Jeff Gorman Is a Big Stupid Cheating Idiot Loser and Here's Why I Should Be Named the Commissioner of Our Fantasy Football League

Instead of Him," you *might* want to shorten the title of that folder to something that'll fit in the width of your screen.

CONVERTING A KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Mac users have some extra mojo on their side: when Apple makes the iPhone and Apple makes the OS and Apple makes the presentation software (Keynote, part of the iWork suite), those things tend to work together rather well.

In fact, if you peruse Keynote's Export command (it's under the File menu) you'll find that the app can export your presentation directly into iTunes in the form of a video file that you can sync to your iPhone or iPod Touch (see Figure 23-4).

And it's truly a one-click process. Click Next, specify a name for the new video file
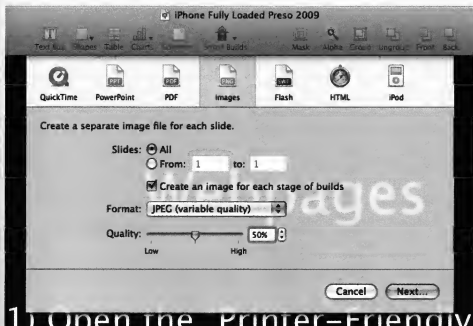
Figure 23-5
A less-sophisticated but simpler-to-use result: exporting to individual pictures

and a place to save it, and Keynote will bound off like a little bunny, rendering the presentation as a series of static images. When it's finished, iTunes will activate, showing you the presentation video in the iTunes library. You can sync it to your iPhone or iPod Touch just like any other video file.

The advantage of this format is that it is packaged as a video. So if you set up any sort of tricky visual transitions and effects (to distract people's attention from the horrifying news about the company's last quarter), they'll all appear in the video file.

The *downside* is that the iPhone and iPod Touch don't really recognize that a presentation is something that tends to stop and start after each slide. So when it's done building your magic pie chart, it'll pause a few

seconds (defined by the "duration" setting in Figure 23-4) and then move on, with or without you. So you'll have to manually tap the Pause button after each slide to hold it there, and then tap again to proceed.

For this reason, you might want to experiment with the simpler Export to Images feature, shown in Figure 23-5.

It's the same deal as when we exported JPEGs from PowerPoint. It spits out a stack of numbered JPEGs, which you can then sync to your iPhone or iPod Touch via its Photo Albums feature (again, check out Chapter 20 for the complete dope on using pictures).

The slideshow feature of the iPhone (or iPod Touch) makes it simple to control the pace of the slides. Plus, because it *is* a stack

sion of this product soon.

And it can't come soon enough. A standard-def presentation will work just fine for almost any content you need to deliver. But when you're driving out to a branch office to inform and explain that due to the expenses incurred in re-branding all corporate signage and letterhead with the new, slightly more purple logo, this office is being shut down effective immediately y'know, that's really worth a 720p-resolution slideshow. Just common courtesy, wouldn't you agree?

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of images, it's easy to go back to the Album view, look at the entire presentation as a series of thumbnails, and just tap on any one slide of interest, or start the presentation from any place you want.

I wonder just where this topic will be a year from now. The Composite AV Cable has a rather poor standing in the Apple Store, much like the nephew who turned down a VP position in the family oil business in order to bring irrigation and sewage systems to struggling third-world villages.

That is: It does fine work and it can be proud of itself. But the rest of the product family regards it as slightly icky. *Standard* video resolution? The shock is enough to send Great-Uncle Nefario's monocle popping out of his good eye and plopping right into his martini glass.

But it's a perfectly fine and functional solution for driving presentations. And with Apple's relentless drive to establish itself as one of the big boys in delivering high-definition content and entertainment, I'm pretty confident that we'll be seeing an HDMI ver-

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And you thought it couldn't get any better

The iPhone was pretty darn perfect in its previous incarnation. Now there's iPhone 3G, with GPS, the App Store, and MobileMe added to the cool stuff it already had. Once Andy Ihnatko shows you how to load movies, TV shows, podcasts, tunes, Web pages, photos, e-mails, presentations, and stacks of newly available Apple apps onto your iPhone, you truly *will* have the world in your pocket. The coolest high-tech toy in the cosmos just got cooler.

- Add up to a terabyte of additional storage
- Turn e-mails and websites into spoken audiobooks
- Access all of your Microsoft® Office docs without an Internet connection
- Capture free, first-run TV shows straight from network video sites
- Convert commercial DVDs into free movie files
- Listen to live Internet radio stations

ANDY IHNATKO is a world-renowned Mac pundit, blogger, author, and speaker. Author of the critically acclaimed *Mac OS X Tiger Book* as well as *iPod Fully Loaded*, he has also written for nearly every publication with "Mac" in its name and is currently technology columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

Shelving Category:

ISBN 978-0-470-42876-4
5 1 9

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